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THE EARLY SENTIMENT FOR THE ANNEXATION OF CALIFORNIA: AN ACCOUNT OF THE GROWTH OF AMERICAN INTEREST IN CALIFORNIA FROM 1835 TO 1846

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FOREWORD

For a decade prior to the Mexican War, a well-defined movement for the annexation of California was developing in the United States. Various writers have given some attention to isolated incidents properly belonging to this movement, but hitherto no one has traced its growth in any systematic or connected way. To do this is the aim of the following discussion. In it, after roughly outlining the various ways in which California was first brought to the attention of the American people, I have devoted considerable space to the efforts made by Jackson, Tyler, and Polk to purchase the province from Mexico; to popular interest throughout the United States in its acquisition; and to the growth of emigration from the western states. I have considered it worth while, also, to show the effect of current rumors that one or more European nations were seeking to secure a foothold in the province; and to add a chapter on the influence of slavery upon the American program. To local affairs in California, I have given only so much attention as seemed necessary for a clear understanding of their relation to the movement for annexation.

Inevitably, in the treatment of a subject involving so many details, mistakes have arisen and faults can readily be pointed out. Yet I believe the account to be accurate in the main, and trust that it will shed some new light on a most interesting and important phase of westward expansion. Wherever possible I have gotten my material from manuscript sources, finding the official documents on file in the State Department; the Polk, Jackson, and Van Buren correspondence in the Library of Congress; and the Larkin correspondence in the Bancroft Collection of the University of California especially rich in this regard.

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Frequent use has also been made of contemporary writings of the time, whether in book, magazine, or newspaper form. These have been indicated by references throughout the text, as have also the considerable number of secondary authorities and government publications upon which I have been privileged to draw.

It would be but a poor return on my part if I made no mention of the assistance I have received in the preparation of this work. To the Chief Clerk of the State Department; to Mr. Gaillard Hunt, Chief of the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress; and to the authorities of the State University of California for permission to use the material of the Bancroft Collection, I am especially grateful. Two men, however, more than any others deserve my warmest thanks. These are Professor Herbert E. Bolton of the University of California, upon whose kindly interest and help I have never counted in vain; and Professor Robert M. McElroy, under whose direction this study was undertaken and whose friendship has been a constant source of inspiration.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF INTERCOURSE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CALIFORNIA, AND THE FIRST NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE PROVINCE

The fur trade.—The interest of the United States in California began toward the close of the eighteenth century. It was at first due almost entirely to economic causes; and, like many commercial activities of the day, centered chiefly in New England. In 1787, shortly after the opening of the Chinese-American trade by William Shaw, Robert Gray and John Kendrick, commanding the *Lady Washington* and the *Columbia*, sailed for the northwest coast of the Pacific, partly on a voyage of exploration and partly for the discovery of new fields for commercial enterprises.[1]

This venture though of primary interest in the history of the region around the Columbia, was also of great importance from the standpoint of California. In the first place it so aroused the jealousy of the Spanish government that the authorities of Mexico instructed those of California to seize "a ship named *Columbia* which they say belongs to General Washington of the American States," should it arrive at San Francisco.[2] In the second place, it was by this voyage that Gray, having found a ready market at Canton[3] for a few hundred sea otter skins procured from the Indians, opened up a profitable fur trade with China[4] in which New England merchants were eager to participate.

The arrival of one of these American fur-trading vessels at Monterey on October 29, 1795, marks the beginning of a commercial intercourse between New England and California, that, assuming various forms, continued for half a century and did

[1]Robert Greenhow, *History of Oregon and California* (Boston. Little and Brown. 1844), 179-181.

[2]Pedro Fages to Josef Argüello, May 13, 1789, in Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Works* (San Francisco. A. L. Bancroft & Co. 1882-90), XVIII, 445. See also Greenhow, 184-185.

[3]China was then the world's greatest fur market. For the relation of the Cantonese fur trade to the settlement of Astoria, see the letter of Astor to Adams, Jan. 4, 1823, in Greenhow, 439.

[4]Gray valued 100 skins at $4,875, exclusive of freight. Gray and Ingraham to Don Juan Francisco, Aug. 3, 1792, in Greenhow, 417.

much in an indirect way to bring about the acquisition of the latter province by the United States.

In accordance with Spain's general colonial policy, the inhabitants of California were forbidden to trade or have any dealings with foreigners. But Spain lay many leagues away, and while some officials conscientiously tried to enforce the royal commands, they found the prevention of the illicit trade, for which both Americans and Californians were eager, quite impossible.[5] On the contrary, within a few years it had grown to a very considerable size, especially as from 1796 to 1814 the direct trade with China from the North Pacific Coast lay almost wholly in American hands.[6]

Much of this early fur trade, it is true, was carried on north of the California line, but the most valuable furs—those of the sea otter—were found in greatest abundance along the California coast from San Diego northward. These were sometimes obtained, as already indicated, by illicit purchase or barter from the Californians, of whom the mission authorities were the most dependable sources of supply. More often, however, they were poached along the great stretches of unfrequented shore, or from the neighboring channel islands, and at times, indeed, from the waters of the principal harbors, to the great, but helpless indignation of the Spanish authorities, who had neither skiff nor scow in which to pursue the intruders.[7] The skins thus obtained were carried to Canton and there exchanged for tea, lacquered ware, silks, and the various other commodities of the Chinese markets. These in turn were brought back either to the Russian settlements of Alaska or to California, where they found ready disposal; or quite as frequently they were transported direct to Europe or the United States.[8]

[5]An American navigator, writing in 1808, said that for several years trading vessels of the United States had left as much as $25,000 in specie annually among the Californians and that the government was powerless to prevent this intercourse (Robert Shaler, in *American Register*, III, 147 *et seq.*). Money, it should be remarked, was never plentiful among the Californians, and such a sum as Shaler mentioned was of material benefit to the financial interests of the country.

[6]Greenhow, 266, quoting from London *Quarterly Review*, October, 1816.

[7]Bancroft, XIX, 63-64.

[8]For a general discussion of the Boston-California-China trade, see William Heath Davis, *Sixty Years in California* (San Francisco. A. J. Leary. 1889), 295-6. Davis came to California in 1816.
In 1803 Thomas O'Cain made a contract with the Russian Baranof to

The whale fisheries.—In speaking of these early commercial enterprises, it is also necessary to mention New England's interest in the whale industry, which, like the northwest trade, gave her also a first hand knowledge of California. Edmund Burke's tribute to the men of Nantucket and New Bedford was not misplaced;[9] and while the Revolutionary War put a temporary stop to their voyages, no sooner was peace declared than they were again "vexing strange seas" with their fisheries.

Shortly after 1800, these vessels, oily, ill-smelling, and often sadly in need of repairs, began to touch at the California ports for fresh supplies before beginning the long homeward voyage around the Horn. As the North Pacific came to furnish a more and more valuable hunting ground,[10] these visits increased in frequency and soon a regular trade was established with the inhabitants of Monterey and San Francisco. This was largely a system of barter, by which, in exchange for some four or five hundred dollars worth of New England manufactured goods, carried for the purpose, a returning whaler could secure sufficient fresh provisions for its journey home.

Hide and tallow trade.—A third form of commercial intercourse between California and the United States, more direct than the other two, was begun in 1822, after Mexico had achieved her independence.[11] In that year, owing chiefly to the representations of William A. Gale, a former fur trader on the northwest coast, the Boston firm of Bryant and Sturgis, with several business companions, were induced to fit out a vessel to open up a new line of trade with the Pacific, exchanging New England's abundant

hunt otter in California on shares. The Russians were to supply the Indian hunters, and the Americans agreed to transport the skins and furnish the Alaskan settlements with supplies. The venture was so profitable that other contracts of a similar nature were entered into, the agreements lasting until 1815. The Winships were prominent in these dealings. Bancroft, XIX, 63 *et seq.* For an effort of the Russian Government to secure the official sanction of the United States to this arrangement, see Greenhow, 275.

[9]*The Works of Edmund Burke* (Boston. Little and Brown. 1839), II, 30.

[10]From 1816 to 1822 the industry brought in more than $6,000,000 to Nantucket and New Bedford alone, and employed 129 vessels. Many urged the occupancy of Oregon to supply these American vessels with a port for refitting and provisioning. *Annals of Congress*, XL, 414 *et seq.*

[11]Bancroft, XIX, 475.

stock of manufactures for the hides and tallow of the California cattle. From this time on, the "Boston ships," as they were called, plied regularly up and down the California coast, disposing of their cargoes in all harbors from San Diego to San Francisco, and receiving hides and tallow in return.[12]

The Russian advance.—By the end of the first quarter of the century a loose connection had thus been established with California through these various mediums of trade. In addition to this, the progress of the Russians down the coast from their settlements in Alaska had begun to attract the attention of the United States, even in an official way. As early as 1808, a warning was issued against this advance by an article in the *American Register.*[13] The author, Captain Robert Shaler, having been engaged in the Chinese trade some years before, had acquired an intimate knowledge of the conditions in California and of the undeveloped possibilities of the country. After describing these, he went on to point out the feebleness of the government and the ease with which it would become a prey to the attack of any hostile force, dwelling especially upon the unfortified state of the harbors. San Francisco, whose advantages were strikingly portrayed, was guarded by a battery which made only a "show of defence." At Monterey conditions were no better. Santa Barbara "would fall an easy conquest to the smallest ship of war." San Diego, with all its natural facilities, had only a "sorry" defence; while the harbors of Lower California were in an equally forlorn condition. But not only had the Spaniards failed to provide against the encroachments of their northern neighbors; they had rather, according to Shaler, made such encroachment easier by their very attempts at defensive measures, having taken "every obstacle out of the way of an invading enemy," by stocking the province with cattle and colonizing it with a discontented lot

[12]It should be noted that this commercial intercourse brought a number of Americans to the province as permanent residents. Many of these took out naturalization papers, became large land holders, and married wives from prominent California families. Some were of a less desirable character—deserters and broken-down sailors from the whaling and trading ships. Bancroft, XIX-XX, Appendix, *Pioneer Register and Index.*

[13]*American Register,* III, 136-175. The article is entitled *"Journal of a voyage between China and the northwestern coast of America made in 1804."* The part dealing with California is on pages 147-161. See also Bancroft, XIX, 23-24, note.

who would welcome the security and kindly treatment of a foreign government.[14]

Exactly how far Shaler aimed to excite an apprehension of Russia's dealings in the Pacific, and how far he desired to emphasize the desirability of California as an object for American annexation, does not appear. Probably, however, when he wrote, "The conquest of this country would be absolutely nothing; it would fall without an effort to the most inconsiderable force," he had both purposes in mind, and thus made himself the pioneer of a not inconsiderable body of later writers who advocated annexation to forestall foreign interference.

However this may be, Shaler's warning against the Russians was well founded.[15] The hunters of the Russian-American company had long been coming to California in search of furs; and in 1812 Baranof, the "Little Czar," succeeded in establishing a colony, to which he gave the name of Ross, not far from Bodega Bay, and some thirty miles north of San Francisco. The object of this settlement, in its commercial aspect, was not merely to secure a larger interest in the California fur trade, but to supply the parent colony of Russians at New Archangel, or Sitka, with grain and other food-stuffs which could not be produced in the bleaker north. In addition, Baranof had the more important purpose of ultimately extending the Czar's control over a large part of Upper California by means of this colony, and especially of seizing the Bay of San Francisco.[16]

Against this encroachment the Spanish officials protested from time to time at the bidding of their superiors, but probably with no great desire of seeing their protests effective, as the trade conducted by the Russians proved of material benefit to the province. And even had it been otherwise, there was no force in California sufficient to expel them.[17] Before many years, how-

[14] *American Register*, III, 160-161.

[15] California was colonized largely to protect the coast against the Russian advance. This was as early as 1769. Bancroft, XIX, 58.

[16] Letter of Rezánof, Feb. 15, 1806, in Bancroft, XIX, 80, note.

[17] For the Russian settlements in California, see Bancroft, XIX, 58-82, 294-320; Thomas C. Lancey, *Cruise of the Dale* (Published in San José *Pioneer*, 1879(?), and preserved in bound form in the Bancroft Collection), 31 *et seq.*; Agnes C. Laut, *Vikings of the Pacific* (New York. Macmillan. 1905), 292, 338; Franklin H. Tuthill, *History of California* (San Francisco, H. H. Bancroft & Co. 1866), 118-20; Irving B. Rich-

ever, the presence of the Russians in California began to excite comment in the United States and to receive a certain amount of official attention. On November 11, 1818, J. B. Prevost, a special commissioner of the United States government to the Pacific Coast, wrote from "Monte Rey, New California," that the Spanish authority was threatened by the Russian Czar whose colony had already been planted close to San Francisco, a harbor that, ranking among "the most convenient, extensive and safe" ports of the world, was nevertheless "wholly without defense and in the neighborhood of a feeble, diffused and disaffected population."[18]

In the following year a rumor spread that Spain had ceded to Russia a strip of territory on the Pacific Coast 800 miles long, in return for assistance furnished in the expeditions against the revolutionists of Lima and Buenos Ayres.[19] In the St. Louis *Enquirer* an unknown writer (perhaps Senator Benton) issued a warning against the *"Progress of the Russian Empire,"* well calculated to arouse the apprehension of those to whom Russia, as a member of the Holy Alliance and a rival in the northwest trade, was already an object of sufficient distrust.

"Looking to the east for everything," said the article, "Americans have failed to notice the advance of the Russians on the Pacific Coast until they have succeeded in pushing their settlements as far south as Bodega. Their policy is merely the extension of the policy of Peter the Great and Catherine. Alexander is occupied with a scheme worthy of his vast ambition. . . . The acquisition of the gulf and peninsula of California and the Spanish claim to North America. . . . We learn this not from diplomatic correspondence, but from American fur traders who learn it from the Russian traders now protected by the Emperor in carrying off our furs!"[20] How strong an influence these public

man, *California under Spain and Mexico* (Boston and New York. Houghton, Mifflin Company. 1911), 191-201, *passim*.

[18]Prevost to Adams, in *Documents transmitted to the House of Representatives*, Jan. 24, 1823. *American State Papers, Miscellaneous*, II, 1008-9; *Annals of Congress*, XL, 1209-10.

[19]News brought to Canton by a Russian frigate. *Cruise of the Dale*, 31; reported also in *Niles' Register*, XVI, 237, May 29, 1819; XVII, 232, Dec. 11, 1819.

[20]Reprinted in *Niles' Register*, XVI, 361, July 24, 1819.

rumors and Prevost's official report exerted upon the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 has not yet been accurately determined, but it is certain that the Russian colony at Ross lent color to the fear of a much farther advance to the south; and served also as a strong argument for the establishment of American settlements in Oregon.[21]

Beginning of overland immigration.—Thus by degrees the far off Spanish province on the Pacific was brought to the attention of the American people not merely through the agency of commerce, but, in an equally effective way, through the danger to which it was exposed of passing into the hands of a powerful European nation. A third agency, beginning somewhat later than either of those just named, but operating in a similar manner, was the overland communication with California established by hunters and trappers, and the subsequent immigration that naturally followed from the Western states.

Jedediah Smith.—Two of these early journeys deserve special attention. In August, 1826, Jedediah S. Smith, a native of Connecticut,[22] who had been for some years associated with Ashley in the fur trade and was at this time a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, left the company's post near the Great Salt Lake and after four months' travel reached San Diego with his band of fifteen men. Here Smith was arrested by the California authorities, who demanded passports, in accordance with the Mexican law, from all strangers. His imprisonment did not last long, however, as he soon found a sponsor for his good behavior in an American sea captain by the name of Cunningham, whose ship, the *Courier*, chanced to be in the harbor.

Upon his release, Smith, in spite of the commands of the San Diego authorities that he leave the province, seems to have wandered pretty much as he pleased through the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, being prevented from crossing the Sierra

[21]Report of the Committee on the Occupation of the Columbia River, Jan. 25, 1821. *Annals of Congress*, XXXVII, 955-6. The report mentioned the military defences of Ross, the dominating position of Russia in Europe and Asia; and called attention to the fact that Spain's territory in North America lay wholly open to the access of Russia and was exposed to her "fearful weight of power."

[22]Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (New York. Harper. 1902), I, 252.

Nevadas by heavy snows and the loss of his animals. Late in May, 1827, however, leaving all but two of his companions, he made the difficult passage of the mountains and reached the Great Salt Lake in a destitute condition.[23] In the fall of that year, Smith was again in California, bringing with him a second company of eighteen men, to the rather indignant surprise of the Californians, who, however, while insisting that he leave the country, did not seriously molest him. After remaining for some time, the American intruders continued their journey northward to Oregon where they were attacked by Indians. Many of the company were killed and all the furs lost, but Smith and those of his companions who escaped, made their way to Vancouver, where they obtained assistance from the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company. Two years later this pioneer of California explorers was killed in New Mexico.[24]

The Pattie expedition.—Two years after Smith's arrest in San Diego, a second party of Americans, eight in number, with Sylvester and James Ohio Pattie as leaders, having been found in Lower California without passports, were brought before the Mexican governor, Echeandia, and thrown into prison on the charge of being spies of old Spain. The two Patties, father and son, were Kentuckians who had gradually pushed farther and farther west until they reached New Mexico and Arizona where for some years they were alternately miners and trappers. In was on one of their trapping expeditions down the Colorado that they attempted to cross the desert to the Spanish settlements on the coast, succeeding only after the most distressing and unprintable hardships.

Their reception by the Californians has been noted; nor were they so fortunate as Smith had been in securing a swift release. On the contrary, their prison experience was bitter in the extreme,

[23]Letter of Smith to General Clark published in the *Missouri Republic*, October 11, 1827. Communication from Cunningham announcing Smith's arrival at San Diego, *Ibid.*, Oct. 25, 1827.

[24]No two authorities agree in the account of Smith's adventures. The following, however, are probably the most reliable: Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, I, 282-7; J. M. Guinn, *Captain Jedediah Smith* (Historical Society of Southern California Publications, III, 1896, 45-53). Bancroft (XX, 152-160) bases his account on fragmentary records in the California archives and on a French translation there of the letter from Smith to General Clark cited above.

if we may judge from the younger Pattie's account. Sylvester Pattie died in his cell unattended by his son, who was forbidden to visit his father, and all the prisoners were treated with great severity. Eventually, however, they were released on condition that Pattie should vaccinate the mission Indians, who were dying in great numbers from an epidemic of smallpox. In fulfillment of this agreement Pattie journeyed as far north as San Francisco, and later reached the Russian settlement of Ross. Finally, quitting California, he returned home by way of Mexico, where he vainly hoped to secure an indemnity,[25] and reached Kentucky, a broken and ruined man. The experiences which he underwent, as well as some which he probably did not undergo, were shortly afterwards published under the supervision of Timothy Flint of Cincinnati.[26]

The bitter and oftentimes extravagant criticism of the Californians by the writer was well calculated to arouse a prejudice against them, but for the country itself he had only praise. "Those who traverse it," he wrote, "if they have any capability of perceiving and admiring the beautiful and sublime in scenery, must be constantly excited to wonder and praise. It is no less remarkable for uniting the advantage of healthfulness, a good soil, temperate climate and yet one of exceeding mildness, a happy mixture of level and elevated ground and vicinity to the sea."[27]

Results of the Smith and Pattie expeditions.—The arrival of Smith and the two Patties in California marked a new chapter in the relations of that country and the United States. Follow-

[25]The American chargé d'affaires at Mexico was directed to investigate the arrest of the Pattie Company. He reported that all the prisoners had been freed except Sylvester Pattie, who died in prison; that several of the Americans had remained in California to go into business; and that the younger Pattie was then on his way to the United States. Van Buren to Butler, Jan. 22, 1830; Butler to Van Buren, June 29, 1830. MSS., State Department.

[26]The title of the book is in itself a comprehensive history of Pattie's entire wanderings. We may be forgiven for writing it simply, James Ohio Pattie, *Personal Narrative* (Edited by Timothy Flint. Cincinnati. 1833). A reprint appears in Reuben G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland. Arthur H. Clark Company. 1905), XVIII. A plagiarized edition under the title *"The long hunters of Kentucky,"* by P. Bilson, was published in New York in 1847.

[27]Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, XVIII, 306.

ing them in a surprisingly short time[28] came other bands of trappers under such leaders as Young, Jackson, Wolfskill, Walker, and many others whose names are not known and who left no record of their journeys.[29] Not infrequently members of these early parties gave up their wanderings and became influential and peaceful citizens, while others were a constant menace to the California authorities. As for the rest, coming and going with the seasons, rough, carless of life, contemptuous of law, they wandered up and down the great inland valleys and rivers of California; or by frequent crossing of the Sierras prepared the way for the subsequent flow of immigration.

"One sees in his pages," says Thwaites in referring to Pattie's narrative,

> the beginnings of the drama to be fought out in the Mexican war—the rich and beautiful country which excited the cupidity of the American pioneer; the indolence and effeminacy of the inhabitants which inspired the backwoodsman's contempt; and the vanguard of the American advance, already touching the Rockies and ready to push on to the Pacific. . . . As a part of the vanguard of the American host that was to crowd the Mexican from the fair province of his domain, Pattie's wanderings are typical and suggestive of more than mere adventure.[30]

Butler's negotiations.—In these three ways, therefore, first, by commercial intercourse, then through fear of the Russian advance, and lastly by the opening up of the overland routes of communication, California gradually became more than a passing name to the people of the United States.[31] It was not, however, until 1835 that this government, influenced largely by the representa-

[28] Many of the parties were organized in 1830 and 1831. Bancroft, XX, 384–9.

[29] The reason for this is obvious—the trade was against the Mexican law; and in addition those engaged in it were not often given to recording their own adventures.

[30] Preface to Pattie's *Narrative*, 19.

[31] The first of these centered, as has been shown, in New England; the second concerned the whole country; the third was of primary interest to the west. This division held good until the outbreak of the Mexican War. A fourth cause of increased interest in California during this early period was the agitation of the Oregon question by Benton, Linn, and a small, but persistent, coterie of western senators and representatives. Anything attracting attention to any part of the Pacific coast served indirectly to attract attention to California.

tions of commercial interests, made its first attempt to secure the harbor of San Francisco.[32]

This early negotiation for the purchase of California was closely interwoven with the contemporaneous negotiation for the acquisition of Texas, forming indeed, simply a minor part of the larger project. Anthony Butler, a man eminently unqualified for any position of trust, was sent to Mexico in 1829 to carry out a scheme for the purchase of Texas which he himself had probably suggested,[33] succeeding Joel R. Poinsett, the American minister who was recalled at the request of the Mexican government. For six years Butler was left free to work his will, so far as he was able, with the Mexican officials, and to discredit both himself and his government.

From the first, Butler's communications to the State Department began to hint at bribery as the best means of accomplishing his purpose, and soon were openly advocating it.[34] Early in June,

[32]The statement is not infrequently made that the purchase of California was attempted by Clay when Secretary of State under Adams. See, for example, *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 211; speech of Charles J. Ingersoll, Jan. 19, 1847. *Appendix to Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 sess., 128; Bancroft, XIII, 322-323. Whoever may have written this volume of Bancroft could scarcely have known the contents of volume XX, 399-400, of the same series, or of *H. Ex. Docs.*, 25 Cong., 1 sess., No. 42, which he cites as authority. The boundaries for which Poinsett was instructed to negotiate included no territory west of the Colorado south of the 42d parallel. Clay to Poinsett, March 25, 1825. *H. Ex. Docs.*, 25 Cong., 1 sess., No. 42, p. 6; same to same, March 15, 1827, *Ibid.*, 9. See also *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams with portions of his diary from 1795 to 1848*, edited by C. F. Adams (Philadelphia. Lippincott. 1877), XI, 349.

[33]The plan, dated August 12, 1829, is in the Van Buren MSS., Library of Congress; see also Jackson to Van Buren, Aug. 12 (*Ibid.*), and Jackson's draft of Aug. 13. According to Reeves, the official instructions, dated Aug. 25, were carried by Butler to Poinsett. Jesse S. Reeves, *American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk* (Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins Press. 1907), 65-67. For a complete estimate of Butler and his career in Mexico, the reader is referred to George Lockhart Rives, the *United States and Mexico, 1821-1848* (New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1913), I, 235-261. It is perhaps well to add that the present article was in manuscript before Rives's exhaustive work was issued from the press. I have not been able, therefore, to avail myself of its contents as freely as I could have wished.

[34]Butler has suggested to a Mexican official that the United States is capable of "devising ways and means" of relieving the embarrassment of the treasury (Butler to Jackson, Feb. 23, 1832, Jackson MSS., Library of Congress); Jackson thinks Butler's suggestion "judicious", and one that may "lead to happy results" (Jackson to Butler, April 19, *Ibid.*). Butler believes the use of half a million dollars to put certain personages in the "right humor" will bring speedy conclusion of the treaty (Butler to

1834, he asked to return to the United States on the ground that a personal interview with the President was highly important, and that after it he could return to Mexico to be much more useful to his government.[35] Having finally secured Jackson's consent to his request, Butler landed in New York in the early part of June, 1835, with a still more extensive scheme of bribery in his head than any he had so far suggested, and in his pocket a note signed by Hernández, a priest standing close to Santa Anna.

On June 17 the returned Minister addressed a letter to the Secretary of State, John Forsyth, and enclosed the note from the Mexican priest. In this Hernández had promised to bring about a cession of the desired territory provided $500,000 were placed at his disposal "to be judiciously applied."[36] In the accompanying letter Butler assured Forsyth that the plan, if followed, would result not merely in the acquisition of Texas but eventually in the dominion of the United States "over the whole of that tract of territory known as New Mexico, and higher and lower California, an empire in itself, a paradise in climate . . . rich in minerals and affording a water route to the Pacific through the Arkansas and Colorado rivers."[37]

This letter met with cool response from the President.[38] Nevertheless, after an interview with Butler he allowed him, at his earn-

Jackson, Oct. 28, 1833, *Ibid.*); Jackson warns Butler against employing corrupt means (Jackson to Butler, Nov. 27, *Ibid.*); Butler insists that "resort must be had to bribery," or "presents if the term is more appropriate" (Butler to Jackson, Feb. 6, 1834, *Ibid.*). Later Butler writes McLane that "bribery and corruption" are the sole means of bringing the negotiation to a successful issue. (Butler to McLane, MS., State Department.) Some of these letters are mentioned by Rives.

[35]Butler to Jackson, June 6, 1834. Jackson MSS.; same to same, Oct. 20 (*Ibid.*). It is interesting to note that Butler thought his negotiations for Texas had been thwarted by Stephen F. Austin whom he charged in a letter to McLane with being "one of the bitterest foes to our government and people that is to be found in Mexico." Butler to McLane, July 13, 1834. MS., State Department.

[36]Butler to Forsyth, June 17, 1835 (MS., State Department). See also Rives, as cited, I, 257-258.

[37]Butler to Forsyth, June 17 (quoted also in Reeves, 73-74).

[38]It is endorsed, " . . . Nothing will be countenanced to bring the government under the remotest imputation of being engaged in corruption or bribery . . . A. J." See also Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 348; and Rives, I, 258.

est solicitation, to return to his post in Mexico.[39] Before Butler left, however, the suggestion he had thrown out with regard to "higher California" received additional impulse from another source. On August 1, William A. Slacum, a purser in the United States Navy, wrote a letter to the President which, according to Adams, "kindled the passion of Andrew Jackson for the thirty-seventh line of latitude from the river Arkansas to the South Sea, to include the river and bay of San Francisco, and was the foundation of Forsyth's instruction to Butler of 6 August, 1835."[40]

These instructions mentioned by Adams give the first official attempt of the United States to secure from Mexico any part of her territory on the Pacific. The chief object, as expressed by Forsyth, was to obtain possession of San Francisco Bay which had been "represented to the President"[41] as "a most desirable place of resort for our numerous vessels engaged in the whaling business in the Pacific, far superior to any to which they now have access."[42] No definite sum which Butler was authorized to offer was specified in the dispatch, but Adams places it as $500,000.[43] It should also be noted that Forsyth expressly disclaimed any desire to secure territory south of San Francisco.[44]

[39]It may be added that Butler's presence there was desired neither by Mexicans nor American residents. John Baldwin to Forsyth, Vera Cruz, Nov. 14, 1835. MS., State Department. Miscellaneous Letters.

[40]Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 348. The name of the writer here is given as Slocum, but this is plainly an error. This particular letter unfortunately has disappeared from the files of the State Department where Adams saw it in 1843, but from the correspondence still on record there can be no doubt that the name Slacum is correct. See Forsyth to Ellis (mentioning Slacum's name), April 14, 1836; Ellis to Monasterio, March 8, 1836; &c., &c.; also Slacum's *Report* in *Reports of Committees*, 25 Cong., 3 sess., No. 101, pp. 29-45. Slacum, we learn from the documents cited, was made a special agent of the government to the Pacific coast to investigate conditions there, and especially the progress of the Russians and of the Hudson's Bay Company.

[41]Perhaps by Slacum, yet Adams's testimony regarding the powerful influence of Slacum's letter of Aug. 1st is somewhat weakened by the fact that Jackson had instructed Forsyth to enlarge the scope of Butler's negotiations as early as July 25. *Memoirs*, XI, 361-362.

[42]*H. Ex. Docs.*, 25 Cong., 1 sess., No. 42, pages 18-19.

[43]Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 348.

[44]"We have no desire to interfere with the actual settlements of Mexico on that coast and you may agree to any provision affecting the great object of securing the bay of San Francisco and excluding Monterey and

The proposition thus entrusted to Butler was doubtless never submitted to the Mexican government. On December 27, Butler wrote the Department that it would be useless to push the negotiations at that time, though there was a chance of securing certain commercial privileges for American vessels at San Francisco.[45] A few months later he received notice of his recall,[46] and shortly afterwards left Mexico, carrying off "some of the most important papers of the negotiation."[47]

Indeed, Butler's whole course was one of consistent dishonor. The most surprising part of it, however, was the ease with which he continually hoodwinked and misled his own government; and after reading his correspondence one is freely willing to agree with Adams, that "for six long years he was mystifying Jackson with the positive assurance that he was within a hair's breadth of the object and sure of success, while Jackson was all the time wriggling along and snapping at the bait, like a mackeral after a red rag."[48] It may be further added that Jackson's estimate of Butler was even lower than that of Adams. An endorsement on Butler's letter of March 7, 1834, declared him a "scamp," and when, in 1843, Butler charged Jackson with consenting to his schemes of bribery, the venerable ex-President wrote another endorsement pronouncing him a "liar," in whom there was "neither truth, justice, or gratitude," and whose whole accusation was "a tissue of falsehood and false colourings."[49]

Jackson's later attempts.—After Butler's summary dismissal nothing apparently was done toward carrying out the instructions

the territory in its immediate neighborhood . . ." Forsyth to Butler, as cited.

[45]Butler to Forsyth (MS., State Department).

[46]Same to same, Jan. 15, 1836, *Ibid.* Butler claimed that his prospects for bringing the negotiation to a close were exceedingly favorable when cut short by his recall.

[47]Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 349. The statement of Adams is corroborated by a letter of Asbury Dickens, Acting Secretary of State, to Butler's successor, and by one of Butler's own letters to Jackson. Dickens to Powhatan Ellis, Aug. 19, 1836. MS., State Department; Butler to Jackson, July 28, 1843. Jackson MSS.

[48]Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 368.

[49]Endorsement by Jackson on the back of Butler's letter of July 28, 1843. Butler in this letter also stated that Jackson had promised him the governorship of Texas if he procured its annexation. This Jackson hotly denied in his endorsement.

contained in Forsyth's despatch of August 6. But Jackson before his administration closed made two further tentative efforts to secure California. About the middle of January, 1837,[50] Santa Anna arrived in Washington, after his liberation by General Houston, to request the mediation of the United States between Texas and Mexico.[51] In expectation of his request, or after it was definitely made, Jackson had drawn up the general terms upon which this government would assume the undertaking. That which concerns us, reads as follows:

If Mexico will extend the line of the U. States to the Rio Grand—up that stream to latitude 38 north and then to the pacific including north calafornia we might instruct our minister to give them three millions and a half of dollars and deal then as it respected Texas as a magnanimous nation ought—to wit (?)—if the treaty with Mexico secure the Texians in all their just and legal rights and stipulate to admit them into the United States as one of the Union.[52]

At the time that Jackson was making this proposal to Santa Anna he was also urging upon W. H. Wharton, the Texan Minister at Washington, the necessity of including California within the limits of Texas in order to reconcile the commercial interests of the north and east to annexation by giving them a harbor on the Pacific. "He is very earnest and anxious on this point of claiming the Californias," wrote Wharton to Rusk in reporting Jackson's suggestion, "and says we must not consent to less. This is in strict confidence. Glory to God in the highest!"[53]

[50]Wharton to Austin, Jan. 17, 1837. Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, I, 176-177, in American Historical Association *Report*, 1907, II.

[51]Thomas Maitland Marshall, "The southern boundary of Texas 1821-1840," in THE QUARTERLY, XIV, 285.

[52]Rough draft in Jackson's hand on single sheet, unsigned and undated. Jackson MSS. of the year 1836.

[53]Wharton to Rusk, Jan. 24, 1837. Garrison, *Dip. Cor. Texas*. I, 193-194; also Marshall, as cited. The extension of the Texas boundaries to the Pacific along the 30th parallel had been considered by the Texan government and rejected, chiefly because the territory was too large and thinly populated for government by a "young Republic." This decision had been reported to Jackson before he urged upon Wharton the necessity of including California as a means of reconciling the north. Report of Jackson's special agent, Henry Morfit, to the President. *H. Ex. Docs.*, 24 Cong., 2 sess., No. 35, pages 11-12.

Chapter II

THE GROWTH OF INTEREST DURING THE VAN BUREN AND TYLER ADMINISTRATIONS

During Van Buren's administration no official action toward the acquisition of California was attempted. The straitened condition of the treasury precluded any idea of purchase, even had Mexico manifested a willingness to sell; while the strained relations existing between the two nations throughout the greater part of this period served as an equally effective barrier.[1] Nevertheless the affairs of the distant Mexican province were more than once brought to the attention of the United States and interest in its resources and ultimate destiny grew with every passing year.

Rebellion of 1836.—The first of these local events to attract attention was the revolution begun in the fall of 1836 by several of the prominent native Californians against the Mexican governor, Nicolás Gutiérrez. Without great difficulty the leaders[2] in this movement accomplished their purpose, and after shipping Gutiérrez back to Mexico, placed one of their own number, Juan B. Alvarado, in the governor's chair.[3]

The success of this rebellion against Mexican authority was significant for two reasons. In the first place it was made possible largely through the aid furnished by a company of foreigners,

[1]Powhatan Ellis, the American chargé d'affaires to Mexico, had demanded his passports in December, 1836, following Mexico's failure to adjust the claims of American citizens, and for three years the United States was without a representative at Mexico (*Reeves, Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk, etc.*, 76). The chief source of difficulty between the two nations were the recognition of Texan independence by the United States on the one hand; and the long continued refusal of Mexico to settle the American claims on the other.

[2]The leaders in this revolution were Juan B. Alvarado, inspector of the Monterey custom house, holder of certain civil offices and a man of great popularity; José Castro, governor of California preceding Gutierrez; and Mariano G. Vallejo, who, though taking no active part, lent the weight of his powerful influence to the other leaders. Bancroft, XX, 445-447, *passim*.

[3]The authorities for the revolution of 1836 are numerous. The foregoing account has been taken chiefly from Bancroft, XX, 445-578; Franklin Tuthill, *The History of California*, 141-145; and various works of less importance. Full citation of all authorities on the subject are given in Bancroft.

mostly American trappers, led by Isaac Graham, a Tenneseean of the typical border ruffian type. And in the second place it gave promise for a time of assuming the characteristics and proportions of the Texas movement for independence.[4] But as the California leaders probably had no very great desire for actual separation from Mexico, its net result was merely the substitution of a native governor for one of Mexican appointment.

Exaggerated rumors of this disturbance soon began to circulate throughout the United States, and it was even reported to the State Department that California, having declared her independence, was on the eve of asking the protection of the Russians at Bodega—an event which would mean, said the writer, the United States consul at the Sandwich Islands, the unification of the Russians and Californians and the extension of the Czar's power from the Bay of San Francisco to the Columbia River.[5]

Kelley's Memoir.—During the administration of Van Buren the question of the occupation of Oregon came also to be of critical importance;[6] and, as a natural consequence, California received a certain amount of the nation's interest. In a supplemental report on the Oregon territory submitted to Congress, February 16, 1839, by the committee of foreign affairs, many of the documents contained references to California. While one of them, a memoir by Hall J. Kelley, the eccentric emigration enthusiast of Massachusetts, devoted more than half its space to a description of that country. "I extend my remarks to this part of California," from San Francisco northward, wrote Kelley in explanation, "because it has been and may again be, made the subject of conference and negotiation between Mexico and the United States; and because its future addition to our western possessions is most unquestionably a matter to be desired."[7]

[4]According to Tuthill a lone star flag was prepared, but the Californians were either afraid to substitute it for the Mexican emblem or did not care to do so. Tuthill, 142-143.

[5]United States consul, Sandwich Islands, to the Secretary of State, *Semi-annual report*, March 12, 1837 (Thomas Savage, *Documentos para la historia de California*, II, 174-176. MS., Bancroft Collection, University of California Library). The greater part of this report was devoted to a description of California.

[6]Greenhow, 375-376, and United States government documents there cited.

[7]*Committee Reports*, 25 Cong., 3 sess., No. 101, p. 48. Kelley's com-

Affairs between 1836-1840.—It cannot be said, however, in spite of such efforts as those put forth by Kelley, that the years between 1836 and 1840 were distinguished by any marked increase of immigration from the United States into California.[8] The early traffic along the coast in furs had materially decreased; and even inland, the business was becoming less remunerative. Yet the great interior valleys still offered lucrative fields for the roving bands of American, English, and French trappers who, when not engaged in their ordinary trade, frequently made additional profit by driving off the horses of the Californians, or by joining thieving expeditions sent out by the Indians for the same purpose.[9] The hide and tallow trade likewise continued to flourish,[10] and remained so completely a monopoly of the New England merchants, so far at least as Americans were concerned,[11] that, on the coast, Boston and the United States became synonymous terms.[12] An occasional vessel from the government's South Pacific squadron touched at California ports;[13] a trade in cattle between Oregon and the region around San Francisco served to bring these two territories into closer relationships;[14] the publication of various

plete memoir, addressed to Caleb Cushing, is on pp. 3-61; his description of California occupies pp. 48-53.

[8]Bancroft, XXI, 117. The number of foreign adults residing in California at this time is placed at 380.

[9]John Bidwell, *California in 1841-8*. MS., Bancroft Collection, 99.

[10]The vessels engaged in this trade, usually of four or five hundred tons burden, with cargoes of shoes, hats, furniture, farming implements, chinaware, iron, hardware, crockery, etc., valued at forty or fifty thousand dollars in California, spent usually three years each on the coast before returning to New England. They sold largely on credit, evaded the Mexican tariff laws by paying five or six hundred dollars for the privilege of selling goods from place to place, and received from the Californians instead of money, hides, tallow, dried beef, lumber, and soap. See Thomas O. Larkin, *Description of California*, 99, in his *Official Correspondence*, Bancroft Collection; same to Secretary of State, Jan. 1, 1845, *Ibid.*, Pt. II, No. 16.

[11]Yet see *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 356, for a St. Louis owned vessel engaged in this trade.

[12]Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years before the Mast* (Boston. 1869), 169.

[13]The U. S. S. *Peacock* arrived at Monterey in October, 1836, having been requested to visit the California coast because of the disturbances arising from the revolt of that year. The American merchants of the Sandwich Islands who had large interests at stake in California were the principal petitioners. Bancroft, XXI, 140-2.

[14]*Ibid.*, 85-87; Slacum's *Report*, 39.

books upon California's resources and political condition tended to attract the attention of the outside world;[15] and, finally, the coming of John A. Sutter in 1839 and the establishment of his fort at New Helvetia, the present site of the capital of the State, saved the period under discussion from being by any means barren of results for the American interests.

Neither should the reflexive influence of the events in Texas be omitted in this connection. We have already mentioned the revolution in 1836 and the reports that California was preparing to follow the steps of her sister province. The American mind, especially in the west, had never a high conception of the Mexican people; the ease with which Texas won her independence and the senseless atrocities of the Mexican soldiers had served to increase this feeling to a considerable extent; and restless spirits were already advocating a re-enactment of the scenes of Texas in California. Immigration, however, had not furnished sufficient Americans for carrying out such a program, but it was freely prophesied that these would shortly come.

"To such men as the Back-settlers distance is of little moment," wrote Alexander Forbes in 1838,

> and they are already acquainted with the route. The north American tide of population must roll on southward, and overwhelm not only California but other more important states. This latter event, however, is in the womb of time; but the invasion of California by American settlers is daily talked of; and if Santa Anna had prevailed against Texas a portion of its inhabitants sufficient to overrun California would now have been its masters.[16]

The Graham affair.—So common had become these rumors by 1840 that in April of that year nearly a hundred[17] English and

[15]The most representative books of this period were Dana's *Two Years before the Mast*, and Alexander Forbes's *California: A history of Upper and Lower California* (London. Smith, Elder and Company. 1839). For a review of this latter work and the interest it aroused see *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 70. Numerous other books were written by travelers who visited California during this period, but as they were not published until later no mention is made of them in this place.

[16]Forbes, *History of California*, 152.

[17]Larkin to Secretary of State, April 20, 1844—one hundred arrested; fifty sent in irons to San Blas, thence overland to Tepic. Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 6.

American residents in California, who were without passports, were suddenly arrested for engaging in a plot to overthrow the government and declare the country independent of Mexican control.[18] Chief of these so-called conspirators was Isaac Graham, whose name has already been mentioned in connection with the revolt of the Californians four years before.

Graham and some fifty of his companions, after undergoing a farcical trial at Santa Barbara and some pretty severe treatment at the hands of the California officials, were shipped down the coast and thence to Tepic. Here the English consul, Barron, and Alexander Forbes secured the release of most of the prisoners and a speedy trial for the remainder, which resulted in their acquittal. Some received immediate indemnity for their losses and ill-treatment; others returned to California to secure legal evidence against the government, being aided in this by a vessel of the United States navy.[19]

The illegal arrest of such a large number of American citizens naturally excited some comment in the United States. Powhatan Ellis, who had returned as Minister to Mexico in 1839, was instructed to demand satisfaction for the treatment accorded his countrymen and their immediate release if still in captivity.[20]

[18]Commandancia General de California al E. S. Ministro de Guerra y Marina (Mexico), April 25, 1840. In this communication the chief object of the conspirators was said to be control of the whole stretch of territory around San Francisco Bay. M. G. Vallejo, *Documentos para la historia de California*, IX, No. 124. MSS., Bancroft Collection. See also Nos. 108, 110-111, *Ibid.*; Bancroft, XXI, 11-14, and authorities cited; Alfred Robinson, *Life in California* (New York. Wiley & Putnam. 1846), 180-184.

[19]Albert J. Morris, *Diary of a Crazy Man, or An Account of the Graham Affair of 1840* (MS., Bancroft Collection). Morris was one of the English prisoners, employed in a distillery at the time of his arrest, by Graham. His picture of the sufferings endured at the hands of the California officials is very vivid and probably but little exaggerated. Most of those arrested, however, were insolent, overbearing, and an altogether undesirable class of citizens. See, also, Bancroft, XXI, 1-41; Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Life and Adventures in California and Scenes in the Pacific Ocean* (New York. W. H. Graham. 1846), 70 *et seq.* Farnham followed the prisoners from Monterey to Santa Barbara and later to Tepic. His account, however, is too biased to be relied upon. Tuthill, *History of California*, 145-147.

[20]Forsyth to Ellis, Aug. 21, 1840; same to same, July 1, 1841. MSS., State Department.

It should also be noted that this event first called the official attention of the British government to California. See Ephraim Douglass

Reports of the affair soon found their way into print and for a long time served as proof positive for American readers of the cruelty of the Californians.[21] Later, also, the non-payment of indemnity by Mexico was made the subject of official protest;[22] while several years afterwards, Polk was assured by his confidential agent that no claim or demand so strong as that of the Graham prisoners could be brought against Mexico to secure a cession of California.[23]

As a further result of these arbitrary proceedings against foreigners, a petition was drawn up by the merchants of the California coast, many of whom, however, had little use for Graham and those of his ilk,[24] praying that a United States ship might be stationed permanently in California waters because of the insecurity of property, arbitrariness of the authorities, and mockery of justice prevailing in the province.[25] This request met with prompt recognition from the Secretary of the Navy, Abel P. Upshur, who on December 4, 1841 announced in his annual report to Congress that the protection of American interests in California demanded an increase of the government's naval force in the Pacific, and shortly afterwards despatched Commodore Ap Catesby Jones to take command of the enlarged squadron.[26]

Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas, 1838-1846* (Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins Press. 1910), 236-237.

[21] *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 371. Farnham's account was especially bitter against the Californians. Earlier editions of this book, under various titles, were published in 1841-3-4.

[22] Thompson to Bocanegra, Dec. 31, 1843. MS., State Department. Mexico afterwards paid part of this. Thompson to Secretary of State, February 2, 1844. *Ibid.*

[23] Larkin to Secretary of State, June 15, 1846. Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 47.

[24] Bancroft, XXI, 7-8, and notes.

[25] MS., State Department, Mexico, 1840, No. 10.

[26] Report of the Secretary of the Navy. *Senate Docs.*, 27 Cong., 1 sess., I, No. 1, pp. 368-369. Upshur dwelt at considerable length upon the Graham affair, spoke of the increased immigration to California, and said that the insecurity of American interests there demanded the protection of a naval force. The whale fisheries in the Pacific likewise required the presence of several United States vessels in the ocean; and the Gulf of California should be more thoroughly explored and charted.

For an explanation of this increase by Upshur of the Pacific squadron as a deep laid plot on the part of the slave holders to seize California, see William Jay, *A Review of the Causes and Consequences of the Mexican War* (Boston, Philadelphia, New York. 1849), 81-82.

Immigration 1840-1.—More important, however, for the American cause than any of the results that came from the arrest of Graham and his companions, was the beginning of organized emigration to California during the years 1840-1841. The reports spread by trappers, adventurers, travellers, and Americans residing in California, had by this time begun to bear definite fruit. The west, especially, had become interested in the Pacific Coast and looked to Oregon and California as fields for future settlement. So great was the enthusiasm in Platte County, Missouri, for example, that public meetings were held, committees appointed, and a pledge drawn up, to which five hundred names were appended, binding its signers to convert their property into emigrant outfits and start in the following May[27] from the rendezvous at Sapling Grove, Kansas, for California. Though a number of circumstances served to cool this ardor,[28] and only forty-eight persons left for California at the time agreed upon,[29] the departure of these is significant as foreshadowing a movement that, with occasional interruption, was to continue with increasing energy during the next five years.

John Bidwell, a member of this early party, has left us a typical story of how he and his neighbors and many another family of the west became interested in California between 1840 and the outbreak of the Mexican War. At the time of which we are speaking, Bidwell's neighborhood had become considerably excited over the stories of one whom he described as a "calm, considerate man" by the name of Rubidoux. This story-stelling traveller,

[27] Bidwell, *California;* Josiah Belden, *Historical statement* (MS., Bancroft Collection); Bancroft, XXI, 264-75.

The immediate causes of this enthusiasm for a migration to California were letters received from Dr. John Marsh, an American resident of California, and the stories of Rubidoux.

[28] One cause given both by Bidwell and Bancroft was the efforts of Missouri merchants to discourage the movement, through misrepresentations of California.

[29] Only one of these, Bidwell, had signed the original pledge. The party left May 19, under the command of John Bartleson, in company with a second band of seventeen persons bound for Oregon under the direction of a noted trapper, Fitzpatrick. They followed the usual route of hunters and traders to the Rocky Mountains—"up the north fork of the Platte, by the Sweetwater through the South Pass, and down and up branches of Green River, to Bear River Valley near Great Salt Lake" Bancroft, XXI, 268-269. Here they separated, some of the California party joining the Oregonians, and the remainder, pressing on, eventually reached Marsh's rancho in November, after considerable hardship.

whose brother Joseph was a well-known western trader, having recently returned from a trip to California, brought back such marvelous reports of the productiveness of its soil and the genial qualities of its climate, that a public meeting was held "to hear more about this wonderful country on the Pacific Coast." When Rubidoux had finished his address before this gathering, repeating perhaps in a more formal way what he had already told many in private conversation, he became the target of questions from the audience. One easily imagines the form these took, regarding some particular phase of California conditions in which individuals were interested; or in respect to the length and hardships of the overland journey.

One ague-racked member of the assembly even wanted to know if chills and fever prevailed in that country which Rubidoux had described as a "perfect paradise, a perpetual spring." "There never was but one man in California who had the chills," replied Rubidoux. "He was from Missouri and carried the disease in his system. It was such a curiosity to see a man shake with the chills that the people of Monterey went eighteen miles into the country to see him."[30] Unfortunately Bidwell neglects to state how many of the forty-eight who eventually left Sapling Grove were influenced by this answer to seek an escape from the malaria of the Mississippi Valley and the mournful sufferings to which so many of the early settlers were exposed.

The growing interest of the United States was not wholly confined to the west during these years, however. Notice of the emigrant parties that were leaving Missouri was printed in the eastern papers. In Rochester, New York, John J. Warner, while advocating the building of a railroad across the continent to the Columbia, devoted much of his public lectures to a description of California and the advantages of San Francisco Bay.[31] Harvey Baldwin, from the same neighborhood, perhaps influenced by Warner, addressed a long letter to the president, contrasting the commercial importance and resources of California with the comparative worthlessness of the Oregon territory and urging him to take immediate

[30]Bidwell, *California*, 5-6.

[31]Warner's lecture was printed in the New York *Journal of Commerce* and in the *Colonial Magazine*, V, 229-236. Bancroft, XXI, 223.

steps toward its acquisition.[32] It was in the summer of 1841, also, that an exploring expedition of six vessels under command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes reached San Francisco Bay, with special instructions from the government to make careful surveys of that harbor.[33] And thus in many ways[34] the people and government of the United States were kept in touch with California and its affairs during the early part of the decade beginning with 1840.

Attitude of the Californians.—The feeling among the California officials over the arrival of the immigrant parties of 1841 was one partly of alarm and partly of acquiesence. Early in May, 1841, General Almonte, Mexican Minister of War, wrote to Vallejo, the Comandante General of California, concerning the reported emigration of fifty-eight families from Missouri, and gave strict orders that every foreigner should be compelled to show a passport or leave the country. In the despatch Almonte had also enclosed a clipping from the *National Intelligencer* regarding "the convenience and necessity of the acquisition of the Californias by the United States" and one of similar tenor from the Washington *"Glova."*[35] Nor, with such evidence at hand, is it surprising that he further warned Vallejo to put but little trust in the alleged claim of the Americans that they were coming with peaceful intentions. The Texas immigrants had made the same false assertion.

But in spite of this command from Mexico, the Californians showed little desire to molest the respectable class of settlers from the United States. The members of the Bartleson party were compelled to explain their presence in the country and submit to the formalities of a nominal arrest after which they were free to

[32]Baldwin to Tyler, Jan. 19, 1843, enclosing a copy of a letter to Van Buren, of Sept. 27, 1840. MS., State Department, Miscellaneous Letters, 1843. Baldwin perhaps was interested in a personal way in the acquisition of California. He suggested in his communication that the American claims might be made the basis for negotiation; while Jay (*Mexican War*, 37, 40, 43) mentions a Baldwin as one of the claimants.

[33]Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the Years 1838-42* (Philadelphia. 1845), I, page XXVII; Davis, *Sixty Years in California*, 127 *et seq.*, says Wilkes stated this was with the view of future acquisition.

[34]The rumor of English activities in California was one of the most potent factors at this time. *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 2, 70. Further mention of this is, however, reserved for future discussion.

[35]Vallejo, *Documentos*, No. 146.

go and come as they pleased.[36] While the reception of those arriving by the southern route, though tinged somewhat with suspicion, was equally free from any manifestations of hostility.[37]

Efforts of Waddy Thompson.—A period of renewed activity in the efforts of the United States to gain possession of California, began with the accession of Tyler to the presidency. Shortly before his recall from Mexico, Powhatan Ellis had written to Webster, then Secretary of State, urging the necessity of securing certain ports on the Pacific on account of the increase of American commerce and the growing importance of the whale fisheries.[38] While with the coming of Waddy Thompson as United States minister, a very definite movement was set on foot looking to the purchase of the territory.[39]

In his first despatch to the home government, Thompson showed himself a surprising enthusiast for such an acquisition. Mexico, he thought, would be willing to cede both California and Texas in return for a cancellation of the American claims against her.[40] But of the two, Texas was by far the less desirable, having no comparison in value with California—"the richest, the most beautiful, and healthiest country in the world." Control of Upper California, continued Thompson, would eventually mean the ascendency of the United States over the whole Pacific. The bay of San Francisco was "capacious enough to receive the navies of all the world," while the neighboring forests could supply timber sufficient "to build all the ships of these navies." With this bay in her possession, and the harbors of San Diego and Monterey, the nation would have not only necessary ports for her whaling

[36]A second party numbering twenty-five, organized partly in Missouri and partly from Americans in New Mexico, had reached Los Angeles via the Santa Fé Trail about the time the Bartleson company arrived in the north. The Californians at first were afraid that these had been concerned in the Texan expedition against Santa Fé (Bancroft, XXI, 276-287).

[37]*Ibid.*, 274-275.

[38]Ellis to Webster, Jan. 22, 1842 (MS., State Department). On March 10th, Thomas Carlile was appointed consul at San Francisco by Tyler. Webster to Thompson, April 8, 1842. MS., State Department.

[39]Thompson reached Vera Cruz April 10, 1842. See Waddy Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico* (New York and London. Wiley and Putnam. 1847), 1.

[40]This was the only way in which Thompson saw any hope of Mexican creditors receiving satisfaction.

vessels; but by opening up internal communication with the Arkansas and other western streams, could "secure the trade of India and the whole Pacific Ocean."

In agricultural lines, also, Thompson was assured that California would prove of immense value to the United States, and one day become the "granary of the Pacific." He also believed that, as slavery was not necessary there, the north and south could arrange another compromise. "I am profoundly satisfied," he concluded, after warning Webster against the designs of France and England upon the territory,

> that in its bearing upon all the interests of our country, agricultural, political, manufacturing, commercial and fishing, the importance of the acquisition of California cannot be overestimated. If I could mingle any selfish feelings with interests to my country so vast, I would desire no higher honor than to be an instrument in securing it.[41]

Ten days after he had written this despatch to the Secretary of State, Thompson sent one of like tenor to the president. "Since my despatch to Mr. Webster," he began,

> I have had an interview with Gen. Santa Anna and although I did not broach to him directly the subject of our correspondence I have but little doubt that I shall be able to accomplish your wishes and to add also the acquisition of Upper California.
>
> This latter, I believe, will be by far the most important event that has occurred to our country. Do me the favor to read my despatch to Mr. Webster in which my views of the matter are briefly sketched—I should be most happy to illustrate your administration and my own name by an acquisition of such lasting benefit to my own country.
>
> Upon this subject I beg your special instructions, both as to moving on the matter and the extent to which I am to go in the negotiations and the amount to be paid. The acquisition of Upper California will reconcile the northern people as they have large fishing and commercial interests in the Pacific and we have literally no port there. Be pleased also to have me pretty strongly instructed on the subject of our claims or leave the responsibility

[41] Thompson to Webster, April 29, 1842. MS., State Department. Much of the substance of this despatch was afterwards embodied by Thompson in his *Recollections* (pp. 233-238). A summary is also printed in Reeves, 100-101, but the quotations are not *verbatim* as the text would seem to indicate. See also Rives's *The United States and Mexico*, II, 46.

to me. Procrastination, the policy of all weak governments, is peculiarly so with this, and they are very poor and will never pay us one farthing unless pretty strong measures are taken.[42]

Late in June Webster answered Thompson's despatches, giving him full liberty to sound the Mexican government upon the subject of ceding a portion of her territory on the Pacific in satisfaction of all, or a part of the American claims. "Although it is desirable that you should present the Port and Harbor of St. Francisco as the prominent object to be obtained," wrote Webster, "yet if a cession should be made, the Province would naturally accompany the Port. It may be useful however for divers reasons, that the convenience and benefit of the Port itself, should at least for the present, be spoken of as what is chiefly desired by the United States." In conclusion, Thompson was advised to proceed in a circumspect manner with the negotiation, and especially warned against giving the impression that the United States was eager for the purchase, since it would be far better to convey the idea that she was willing to settle the debt in this way simply for the convenience of Mexico.[43]

During the summer of 1842 one further communication regarding California came from Thompson; but this, being in the form of a warning against English encroachments, will be considered in another connection. Toward the close of the year all thought of negotiation was temporarily cut short, as it happened, when Webster was especially anxious to secure Mexico's consent to the tripartite agreement,[45] by the seizure of the port of Monterey by Commodore Jones, who, as we have seen, had been placed in command of the Pacific squadron by Secretary Upshur nearly a year before.

The details of this incident have been described so frequently that it would be useless to repeat them here.[46] It may simply

[42]Thompson to Tyler, May 9, 1842. MS., State Department; mentioned also by Reeves, 101.

[43]Webster to Thompson, June 27, 1842, in *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (National Edition. Boston. Little, Brown & Company. 1903), XIV, 611-612. See also Reeves, 102, for different portions of the same letter.

[45]See below, pp. 35-7.

[46]Bancroft, XXI, 298-329; Lyon G. Tyler, *Letters and Times of the Tylers* (Richmond. Whittet & Shepperson. 1885), II, 265-267; H. Von

be said that the American commander, convinced by various reports that the United States and Mexico were at war[47] and that the latter was on the point of ceding California to Great Britain,[48] sailed as rapidly as possible from Callao to Monterey, which he took possession of without opposition, beyond a formal protest from the California officials. The next day, realizing that he had made a mistake, Jones surrendered the town to its former owners with formal apology for his error.

The seizure of Monterey, so far as the Californians themselves were concerned, seems to have been taken pretty much as a matter of course. A full report was forwarded to the Mexican Government[49] and the authorities at Los Angeles availed themselves of the opportunity to charge the captain of one of Jones's vessels, the *Alert,* with spiking the artillery at San Diego and injuring the harbor.[50] American residents were naturally uneasy for a time lest they should suffer from the ill-will engendered among the Californians by the occurrence,[51] but their fears were entirely groundless.[52]

Holst, *The Constitutional and Political History of the United States* (Chicago. Callaghan and Company. 1881), II, 615-620; *H. Ex. Docs.*, 27 Cong., 3 Sess., No. 166, for official account. Many of the secondary accounts were written with a decided bias against the American commander. For example, Jay (pp. 82-86) described it as wholly a move on the part of the slave-holding South.

[47]Jones obtained his information from a letter written by John Parrott, the United States consul at Mazatlan, on June 22. Enclosed was a copy of *El Cosmoplita* of June 4, containing the threatening letters of Bocanegra to Webster concerning the Texas difficulties. Rumors of war were common all along the Pacific coast at the time (Johnson to Larkin, Honolulu, May 26, 1842—"word received from the United States that war may be declared any day." Larkin MSS., I, No. 276; Davis to Larkin, May 30, 1842—"war declared against Mexico." *Ibid.*). Larkin's *Official Correspondence* is designated as such; his private correspondence will hereafter be referred to simply as above—Larkin MSS.

[48]A copy of a Boston paper, with an extract from the New Orleans *Courier* of April 19, stating that Mexico had ceded California to England for $7,000,000, had fallen into his hands. The departure of Admiral Thomas with a British fleet under sealed orders from Callao, lent additional weight to the rumor.

[49]Bocanegra to Thompson, Dec. 28, 1841. MS., State Department.

[50]*Ibid.*

[51]I. C. Jones, a resident of Santa Barbara, wrote that he considered the seizure of Monterey the act of a madman, which would be followed by deplorable results for all Americans in California. He was, however, a confirmed pessimist. Jones to Larkin, Larkin MSS., I, No. 357.

[52]Larkin to Secretary of State, April 16, 1844—Contrary to expectations Jones's action did not engender any ill-will among the Californians

In Mexico, however, a different spirit prevailed. Jones had reported his action both to the authorities at Washington and to Waddy Thompson at Mexico City.[53] Without waiting for instructions from the department, the American minister at once disavowed the seizure of the California town and promised satisfaction for any loss thereby sustained.[54] Jones was recalled and temporarily deprived of his command; while Webster made formal apologies in the name of the government for the proceedings. But beyond this, in the infliction of a far heavier penalty demanded by the Mexican Minister upon the American commodore, both Webster and Tyler refused to go.[55]

In the United States, also, the capture of Monterey furnished John Quincy Adams and others of his kind with fresh ammunition for onslaughts against the administration and its policy of annexing Mexican territory.[56] Reports of these attacks and overdrawn charges made by the Americans against the American president reached Mexico, and served to increase there the spirit of hostility and suspicion already engendered by the incident.[57] So that Thompson was compelled to notify his government that it was "wholly out of the question to do anything as to California and after recent events there it would be imprudent to allude to it in any way," the only possibility of securing territory at all lying in a cession of San Francisco some time in the future when Mexico should find herself unable to pay the awards of the American claims.[58]

but had rather the reverse effect. Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 4.

[53]Jones to Thompson, Oct. 22, 1842. MS., State Department.

[54]Reeves, 106. Thompson was not officially notified to take this course for some months. Webster to Thompson, Jan. 27, 1843. MS., State Department.

[55]Tyler to Webster, Jan. —, 1843. Webster MSS., Library of Congress; same to same, Feb. 9, 1843. Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 267.

[56]For Adams's attitude, see his *Memoirs*, XI, 304 *et seq.*

[57]Thompson to Webster, Jan. 5, 1843—"They are printing in all their newspapers the speech of Mr. Adams made in Massachusetts, and with most injurious effect as it confirms all their unfounded suspicions against us." MS., State Department.

[58]Thompson to Webster, Jan. 30, 1843. Webster MSS. A new scheme connecting California with these unpaid claims had also been suggested to Webster by Brantz Mayer, formerly secretary of legation under Thompson, upon his return to Washington. Mayer's plan, instead of requiring

The proposed Tripartite Agreement.—While this correspondence was being carried on with the American minister at Mexico City, Webster was also making tentative efforts to bring about an arrangement between Great Britain, Mexico and the United States for the settlement of the three vexed questions of Texas, Oregon, and California. As early as the summer of 1842, when Lord Ashburton was in this country as special commissioner, Webster had approached him with the suggestion of settling the Oregon boundary line by ceding the American claims to territory north of the Columbia to Great Britain, in return for a portion of California that should be purchased from Mexico by the two nations in common.[59]

By the beginning of 1843 this idea had come to assume an important place in the plans of the administration.[60] Thompson was instructed to sound the Mexican government on the subject, and it was likewise brought to the notice of General Almonte, Mexican minister at Washington.[61] As England was known to favor it, a rough outline for the basis of negotiations was sent by Webster to Edward Everett, American ambassador at London.[62] The terms of this were as follows:

immediate cession on the part of Mexico, substituted a mortgage to be held by the United States chiefly on "such parts of California or such ports in that department as might be serviceable to our trade in the Pacific and useful to us politically." Such a pledge would result in ultimate ownership by the United States or punctual payments on the part of Mexico. Mayer to Webster, Dec. 9, 1842, MS., State Department. It may be added that this plan of a mortgage probably originated in the reports that English creditors held such a pledge. Thompson, who had quarreled with Mayer, considered his letter an extreme liberty even for one of Mayer's characteristic "vanity and impertinence." Thompson to Webster, Jan. 30, 1843. MS., State Department.

[59]Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 260-261; Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 347.

[60]Reeves (p. 102) rather infers that the California project received scant attention from Webster and Tyler. The documents quoted in the text, it is believed, will contradict this idea.

[61]Webster to Everett, Jan. 29, 1843. Webster, *Works*, XVI, 393-396, *passim*.

[62]Reeves, in a note, p. 103, says that Webster's instructions to Everett, regarding this tripartite agreement, do not appear on file in the State Department. His account has therefore been based wholly on Everett's note to Calhoun of March 28, 1845, in which mention is made of the instructions sent by Webster. See also Schaefer's "British Attitude toward the Oregon Question." *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, XVI, 293-294, note. It is significant that Webster's biographer prints only a part of this letter of Jan. 29, leaving out all portions relating to California or the triparite agreement.

1. Mexico to cede Upper California to the United States.
2. The United States to pay ——— millions of dollars for the cession.
3. Of this sum, ——— millions to be paid to American claimants against Mexico.
4. The remainder to English creditors or bondholders of Mexico.
5. The Oregon boundary to be settled on the line of the Columbia.[63]

Both Webster and Tyler felt that this tripartite arrangement would prove the means of satisfying all sections of the country.[64] Tyler, especially, was anxious to include the admission of California in the terms of any treaty resulting from it, writing to Webster that "Texas might not stand alone, nor . . . the line proposed for Oregon. Texas would reconcile all to the line, while California would reconcile or pacify all to Oregon."[65] He was even anxious to send Webster on a special mission to Great Britain,[66] and Webster expressed a willingness to go provided he could settle the Oregon question and obtain California, for Webster had as much desire to secure the latter, if not more, as did Tyler.[67]

The idea of a special mission was, however, cut short by the adverse action of Congress.[68] Tyler then endeavored to persuade

George Ticknor Curtis, *Life of Daniel Webster* (New York. D. Appleton and Company. 1870), 175-177. George Bancroft, as late as March, 1844, wrote to Van Buren as though this discovery that Webster had been trying to secure California were a great piece of news. It interested Van Buren so much that he tried to find out the details from Silas Wright, who could give him no information. Bancroft to Van Buren, April 11, 1844. Van Buren MSS., Library of Congress. Van Buren's interest doubtless arose from the political value of such information in connection with the question of Texas annexation.

[64]Webster to Everett, as cited, p. 394.

"Webster saw in it the means of winning over the two-thirds vote necessary for the ratification of the boundary treaty with Great Britain (*Ibid.*, 394-395).

[65]Tyler to Webster, undated. Webster MSS.

[66]Same to same, undated. Webster MSS. ". . . what is contemplated is much more important than what has been done. The mission will be large and imposing"—same to same, Feb. 26, 1843. *Ibid.* See, also, Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 261, for the same letters.

[67]For Webster's interest in California, see his letter of Jan. 29, to Everett, already cited so frequently. He afterwards wrote that he considered the bay of San Francisco twenty times more valuable to the United States than all Texas. Curtis, *Life of Webster*, II, 250.

[68]Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 263.

Everett to accept the new embassy to China in order that Webster might take his place in London and carry through the measure under discussion. But Everett, preferring the pleasures of the Court of St. James to the uncertainties of the Mandarin ministry, declined the exchange.[69] About this time, also, Thompson's despatch of January 30 reached Washington, with the information that it would be useless to approach Mexico regarding the cession of any territory; and Webster, whose days of usefulness in the cabinet were over, and who saw no prospects of effecting anything further, either regarding the adjustment of the Oregon difficulties or the acquisition of California, retired to private life.[70]

Following Webster's resignation, and the death of Hugh S. Legaré, after only a month's service as Secretary *ad interim*. the cabinet was reorganized, and in July, Abel P. Upshur, former Secretary of the Navy, became head of the Department of State.

Effect of Mexican hostility to England.—At this time interest centered primarily in Texas where matters were fast coming to a crisis; but in the fall of 1843 Thompson's despatches began to call attention again to California. On September 28 he wrote that the strong bond of friendship, formerly existing between Mexico and England, was fast giving way to a feeling of hostility that had manifested itself openly in an insult to the British flag.[71] A few days later he reported an interview with Santa Anna in which he had been told that, in the event of a collision with Great Britian, which seemed probable, Mexico would look to the United States to protect California.[72]

In less than two weeks Thompson again referred to the subject of his conversation with Santa Anna and assured Upshur that if war actually broke out between the two countries, Mexico would certainly cede California to the United States to keep it from falling into English hands. The comparison suggested in this communication seems worthy of note: "You will remember," wrote Thompson, "that it was the fear of the seizure of Louisiana by England that induced Bonaparte to cede it to us. The acquisition of California will be of little less importance . . .

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] His resignation came May 8, 1843.

[71] Thompson to Upshur, Sept. 28, 1843. MS., State Department.

[72] Same to same, Oct. 3. *Ibid.*

There is no prospect whatever of such a cession but in the event of a war between Mexico and England. Then nothing would be easier."[73]

Order against Americans.—In connection with this subject of the ill will of Mexico toward England the American minister had earlier reported a less hostile feeling prevailing toward his countrymen in Mexico and that the government was coming to look upon them with a far more friendly eye.[74] If this were true at all, however, the change was of a purely temporary nature. As far back as July 14, an order had been issued to the governor of California,[75] Manuel Micheltorena, to expel all citizens of the United States from his province and prohibit future immigration.[76] This, however, did not come under Thompson's notice until late in December, when he at once vigorously protested and demanded its recission. His communications on the subject remaining unanswered, he threatened next to break off diplomatic relations, and even called for his passports.

Upon this the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations assured him that the order was meant to apply to other foreigners as well as to Americans and had been aimed only at "seditious" inhabitants of the province, to whose governor "very benevolent explanations" had been sent. This, though not satisfactory, was sufficient to prevent Thompson from leaving Mexico, especially as he had no great desire to carry his threat into execution; while upon his further remonstrance, the order was entirely countermanded.[77] In obtaining the withdrawal of a somewhat

[73]Thompson to Upshur, Oct. 14, 1843. The omission indicated in quotation represents requests for instructions concerning California. Same to same, Oct. 29. Fear of war with England alone will enable him to conclude a new convention for the settlement of the American claims; see also same to same, Nov. 20, and Jan. 16. MSS., State Department.

[74]Thompson to Upshur, Oct. 20, 1843. MS., State Department.

[75]Also to the Governors of Sonora, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua.

[76]Bancroft (XXI, 380-1) says there is no evidence that the order ever reached California. Thompson, on the contrary, wrote, in the despatch cited, that Micheltorena assured the Mexican government he had already taken measures to carry out the command. At least, however, it may be said that the law caused no excitement in California or uneasiness among the American residents.

[77]For details regarding this command, see Thompson to Upshur, Jan. 4, 1844 (MS., State Department); Thompson, *Recollections*, 227; *Niles' Register*, LXV, 353.

similar law, prohibiting foreigners from engaging in retail trade either in Mexico or any of her provinces, Thompson was not, however, by any means so successful.[78]

On February 28, 1844, Upshur lost his life by the explosion on board the *Princeton*, and Calhoun took his place in the cabinet, his appointment, according to Duff Green, having been urged for the three-fold purpose of conducting "the negotiation for the annexation of Texas, the purchase of California, and the adjustment of our northwestern boundary."[79]

Hasting's scheme for an independent California.—Ben E. Green, the son of Duff Green, who had been secretary of legation under Thompson, was appointed *chargé* upon the return of the latter to the United States, and entrusted with securing the assent of Mexico to the annexation of Texas.[80] This was no easy task. Whatever ill-will there had been against England had died away, and though in its place some difficulty had arisen with France, the great weight of Mexican hostility was directed toward the government at Washington. But whether with France or with the United States, Santa Anna was openly advocating a foreign war to develop the nation's resources, and Green could see no benefit to be gained by this country from becoming a party to such a quarrel, "unless, indeed, we should end by gaining possession of California, and thereby secure a harborage for our shipping on the Pacific and one of the finest countries on the Globe."[81]

A few days later, having received word of Upshur's death and Calhoun's appointment, Green wrote privately to the latter concerning some information in his possession, which he thought

[78]Thompson(?) to Larkin, United States Legation, Mexico, March 1, 1844. Has continued to hope that order would be rescinded but sees no hope for it now. Clear violation of treaty rights, etc. Larkin MSS., II, No. 66. See, also, Thompson's *Recollections*, 229-230.

[79]Duff Green, *Facts and Suggestions* (New York. Richardson & Co. 1866), 85.

[80]Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 298; statement of Benjamin E. Green, Aug. 8, 1889, *Ibid.*, III, 174-175. Johnston wrote Polk of a rumor that Green was authorized to offer $10,000,000 to Mexico, and the guaranty to her of the Californias against all other nations. Benton says the treaty when understood is more damnable than the correspondence." Johnston to Polk, May 5, 1844. Polk MSS., Library of Congress.

[81]Ben E. Green to Secretary of State, April 8, 1844. MSS., State Department.

might prove important in the Oregon and Texas negotiations.[82] The substance of this was derived from a confidential interview about three months before with Lansford W. Hastings, a sometime resident of California, of whom we shall also have occasion to speak hereafter.

Hastings, on his way from California to New York, had given Green very positive assurance that a movement for independence was on foot in California, and only waited his return, with a party of emigrants as reinforcements, before materializing. There was also talk in Oregon of uniting with California and forming a separate republic; and the movement once begun would speedily be joined by the Mexican provinces bordering upon Texas.[83] The certainty of this was rendered more imminent by Santa Anna's attempt to provoke a war with France, which, if it came and were properly managed, would result in the annexation of the disaffected provinces to Texas. With such an addition of territory, Green warned Calhoun, who was already prone to alarms, "that Texas would no longer desire admission to our Union, but on the contrary would prove a dangerous rival both to the cotton interests of the South and the manufactures of the North."[84]

Efforts of Duff Green.—Following this despatch Calhoun received a more detailed report on California and the whole Mexican situation from a personal interview with Waddy Thompson who returned about this time from Mexico.[85] The rejection of the Texas treaty in the senate on June 9, however, left little place in the plans of the administration for immediate action regarding

[82]Green spoke of Calhoun's appointment as "with a view to the Oregon and Texas questions." It is to be noted that, as in this despatch which spoke of Oregon and Texas only in a subordinate relation to California, California was often included under the general heading of "the Oregon question," or the "Texas question."

[83]As Hastings had given this information to Green three months before, the time for the denouement in California was probably not far away.

[84]Green to Calhoun, April 11, 1844. *Correspondence of John C. Calhoun*, edited by J. Franklin Jameson in American Historical Association *Report*, 1899, II, 945-947. This will hereafter be referred to simply as Calhoun's *Correspondence*.

[85]Same to same, May 30, 1844. *Ibid.*, 961. Calhoun was also informed of the encroachments of the Hudson's Bay Company in California. Larkin to Calhoun, June 20, 1844. MS., State Department.

Larkin had been appointed consul at Monterey, May 1, 1843. Webster to Thompson, May 5. MS., State Department.

California.[86] But early in the fall, Calhoun made a further attempt to open negotiations for the acquisition of that province in connection with the annexation of Texas. Duff Green, a close friend, was sent to Galveston nominally with the exequatur of consul, but in reality as Calhoun's special agent to join with Ben E. Green, his son, "in conducting the negotiation for the acquisition of Texas, New Mexico, and California."

Green arrived at Galveston shortly before the second of October,[87] but apparently did not tarry long at his supposed destination as we find him writing Calhoun on the 28th from Mexico City. This communication deserves special mention, not merely because it showed the futility of any immediate attempt to secure a cession of Mexican territory but because the reason given in this particular instance explains very effectually the consistent rejection of similar proposals made by the United States, from that of Poinsett in 1825 to the final offer of Slidell in 1846.

"I am convinced," wrote Green, "that it is *impossible* to obtain the consent of this Government to the cession to the United States of Texas, California or any part of the public domain of Mexico whatever." Then followed a long dissertation on Santa Anna's hostile policy toward the United States, pursued since 1825 for his own selfish interests; a description of the chaotic state into which the government had fallen; and certain remarks upon the constant factional strife with which the land was cursed. "In such a state of things," he continued,

> in the midst of a civil conflict where each party is seeking pretences to murder and confiscate the property of their opponents, and where the principle [is maintained] that it is treason to sell any part of the public domain to the United States, it is worse than folly to suppose that either party can alienate any part of Texas or California.[88]

[86] During the year 1844 a California representative, by name of Castañares, was in Mexico pleading for aid for the department, warning the government against American designs, and prophesying the loss of California unless active measures were taken to prevent its falling into the hands of the United States. Bancroft, XXI, 413 *et seq.*

[87] *Facts and Suggestions*, 85. Green says elsewhere that Calhoun told him success in the negotiation would mean a more valuable commerce on the Pacific within a few years than on the Atlantic. Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, III, 174-175.

[88] Memucan Hunt to Calhoun, Oct. 2, 1844. Calhoun *Correspondence*, 975. Mention is here made of Green's consular position.

Farther along in his despatch, Green again laid emphasis upon the fact—which Americans, eager for territory and cognizant of Mexico's need of funds and the easy virtue of some of her officials, were slow to grasp—that any party venturing to sell Texas or California would surely be overthrown, its leaders shot and their property taken over by a rival faction. Out of this difficulty only one way lay open to the United States government; and that, though it promised all the administration could ask, Green refused to specify in writing, reserving his explanation for a personal interview after visiting Texas.[89]

Following Duff Green's departure from Mexico, little concerning California occurs in the correspondence that passed between Wilson Shannon, the American minister who succeeded Thompson, and Calhoun. One important despatch respecting English designs, which will be noticed later, was sent early in January, 1845;[90] while on the 16th of the same month Shannon wrote that there might be a bare possibility of reopening negotiations with the new government of Paredes and Herrera[91] because of their desperate need of funds.[92] But the breaking off of diplomatic relations, following the annexation of Texas soon after this, put an effectual stop to all attempts at negotiation for California until Slidell entered the field under Polk's direction.

It should be noted, however, in any discussion of the diplomacy of this period that it was during Tyler's administration that the first hint of Polk's subsequent policy regarding the internal affairs of California is to be found. Larkin, after his appointment as

[89]Duff Green to Calhoun, Oct. 28, 1844. *Ibid.*, 975-980. It is more than probable that Green had reference to the movement he afterwards endeavored to stir up in Texas looking to the revolt of several of the Mexican provinces, including California. Anson Jones, *Republic of Texas*, 412-414; Donelson to Calhoun, Jan. 27, 1845, Calhoun *Correspondence*, 1019-1020.

[90]Green also had something to say in his despatches about England's hold on California.

[91]Shannon to Calhoun, Jan. 16, 1845. MS., State Department. Ben Green asserted that the Herrera government was favorably inclined to cede New Mexico and California to the United States, and that he and the United States consul, J. D. Marks, at Matamoras came to Washington to acquaint Tyler with the fact and arrange the negotiation. The appointment of Slidell as minister, according to Green, brought their plans to a standstill (Tylers *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, III, 174-177).

[92]Santa Anna's overthrow took place about the middle of January.

consul, kept the State Department well informed as to events in the province, especially regarding immigration, the attitude of California officials, and the proceedings of the Hudson's Bay Company. In this he was encouraged by the authorities at Washington; and, still farther, urged to report anything concerning the political condition of California that could "be made subservient to or may effect (*sic*) the interest and well being of our government."[93] It was an enlargement upon this plan, that, as we shall see, Polk made use of about one year later.

[93]Larkin to Secretary of State, April 16, 1844. *Official Correspondence*, II, No. 4; same to same, Aug. 18, *Ibid.*, No. 9. Crallé, Acting Secretary of State, to Larkin, Oct. 25, 1844. Larkin MSS., VI, No. 223.

Chapter III

First Efforts of the Polk Administration

Having traced the course of the Tyler administration with regard to California, we must now turn to the internal affairs of the province and the growth of popular interest throughout the country in its concerns. During 1842 no emigration of any importance took place from the United States.[1] But the friends of the movement were busy;[2] and toward the close of the year, General Almonte, the Mexican minister at Washington, found it necessary to counteract their representations by an article denying the report that California officials extended a ready welcome to foreigners.[3] In this, however, he was giving the views of the Mexican government, and not those of the authorities of the province.[4]

Immigration and Commerce.—In 1843 two considerable parties reached California under the direction of leaders who, having already made the journey, had returned to the western states to encourage others of their countrymen to follow their example. One of these companies, numbering perhaps forty individuals, was led by Lansford W. Hastings and came by way of Oregon.[5] The other, slightly larger, left Missouri in May under Joseph B. Chiles, a member of the Bartleson company of 1841. Dividing at Fort Hall, part of the emigrants completed their journey

[1] Bancroft, XXI, 341.

[2] *Niles' Register*, LXIII, 242; Larkin to James G. Bennett of the New York *Herald*, Feb. 2, 1842. Larkin MSS., II, No. 6.

[3] *Baltimore American*, Dec. 24, 1842, reprinted in *Niles' Register*, LXIII, 277.

[4] For the order against foreigners issued by the Mexican government, see above, The Quarterly, XVIII, 35-36. The Californians opposed no objection or obstacle to the coming of the Americans. Bancroft, XXI, 380.

[5] Bancroft, XXI, 389-392; Hinckley to Larkin, July 20, 1843, notes the arrival of forty immigrants of respectable character under Hastings. He thought the country would soon be overstocked if the influx continued. Larkin MSS., II, No. 24.

with Chiles, while the remainder followed Walker over a more difficult southern route.[6]

The year 1844 saw still further reinforcement of the American population in California,[7] accompanied by increased interest throughout the United States. Notice of the repeal of the law against foreigners by the Mexican government was published in the newspapers;[8] the state department was assured that Americans were looked upon with favor in California;[9] and numerous books and communications setting forth the advantages of the province were placed in the hands of American leaders.[10] Commercial relations with the United States showed little change during this period.[11] The year 1843 was one of hard times, and

[6] Bancroft, XXI, 393-395.

[7] *Ibid.*, 444 *et seq.*, notes two considerable parties—one under Andrew Kelsey of thirty-six persons, and the other under Elisha Stevens of nearly one hundred. The latter brought the first wagon ever used in a complete overland trip. See also Sutter to Larkin, July 7 and Aug. 8; Bidwell to Larkin, Dec. 13, 1844; Larkin MSS., II, Nos. 140, 157, 286.

From this on no attempt is made to follow in detail the arrival of emigrant parties, though note is usually made of the more important.

[8] *Niles' Register*, LXV, 353.

[9] Larkin to Secretary of State, Aug. 16, 1844. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 4; same to same, Aug. 18, *Ibid.*, No. 9; same to R. J. Walker, Aug. 4, *Ibid.*, No. 11.

[10] Among these may be mentioned Thomas Jefferson Farnham's *Travels in California and Scenes in the Pacific Ocean* (New York. 1844); Charles Wilkes' *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard. 1844, 1845); L. W. Hastings, *Emigrant's Guide to Oregon to Oregon and California* (Cincinnati. 1845), etc. Most of these gave the usual descriptions of the political conditions of California, and of its commercial and agricultural advantages. All devote considerable space to San Francisco. For the influence exerted in this way, especially by Farnham, see Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, XXVIII, 14; and McMaster, *History of the United States*, VII, 297. Hastings's efforts in connection with immigration will be considered later. Wilkes's narrative, only a small part of which dealt with California, ran through several editions. A somewhat scathing review of the contributions made by Wilkes is to be found in the *North American Review*, XVI, 54-107.

Larkin also was busy at this time encouraging immigration. Besides his despatches to the State Department, already noted, he collected information regarding all arrivals and sent communications to the American papers tending to arouse an interest in California. See, for example, Larkin to Sutter, April 29, 1844; Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 7; Robinson to Larkin, Sept. 24, 1844; Larkin MSS., II, No. 210.

[11] For a general description of trading conditions along the coast, see Larkin, *Description of California* (Commerce). Duties of the principal vessels amounted to sums ranging from $5000 to $25,000. A storage charge of twelve and a half cents (one *real*) was made for each large bale, and half the amount for wharfage. Tonnage dues were $1.50 per

the trading vessels had difficulty in securing even a fraction of their accustomed cargo of hides.[12] Whaling ships in larger numbers[13] continued to use the California ports, especially San Francisco, as depots, for reprovisioning and refitting. But until the middle of 1844 nothing of importance occurred to break the ordinary routine of trade conditions along the coast.

In that year, however, certain changes were made in the California tariff laws that benefited one class of American commerce and injured another. The practice had become common for vessels flying the Mexican flag to pay duties at Mazatlan; and thus, through the ruling of the Mexican law, to secure free access for their cargoes into California. This custom, however, was playing sad havoc with the profits of the Boston ships and with the revenues of the province, all of which were derived from customs receipts, as well. So, in order to protect the threatened provincial treasury and keep the New England trade, the assembly and governor calmly set the Mexican law aside and required all goods, whether paying duties at a port of the home government or not, to abide by the regulation of the custom house at Monterey;[14] while a

ton. There were no health or quarantine regulations, and no further port charges or fees. There were no prohibitions or restrictions as to the class of imports, no bounty or navigation acts and no drawbacks. Smuggling was common, and the bribery of California customs officials a recognized part of the trade.

The following table of customs receipts shows pretty clearly the relative volume of trade from 1839 to 1845:

1839	$ 85,613
1840	72,308
1841	101,150
1842	73,729
1843	52,000
1844	78,739
1845	138,360

Larkin to Secretary of State, Dec. 31, 1845. Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 32.

[12]There were only 63,000 hides available for sixteen vessels. Bancroft, XXI, 339.

[13]Davis, *Sixty Years in California* (214-215) says that as many as thirty or forty whaling vessels were in the port of San Francisco at one time during 1843, 1844, and 1845. See also Larkin to Calhoun, Aug. 24, 1844. MS., State Department; same to same, Dec. 12—Thinks there will be six hundred American vessels on northwest coast within three years. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 13.

[14]The Californians claimed they did this because the Mazatlan officials, with the hope of lining their own pockets, allowed a lower rate of duty than the law specified, and that a receipt for customs duties was frequently given when only a bribe had been paid by the ship owner or captain.

further disregard for the national authority was shown, as indeed it long had been, by permitting the introduction of various commodities prohibited by Mexican law, upon the payment of local duties.[15]

The second alteration in the regulations governing trade along the coast, while of advantage to the Boston merchants, worked no slight temporary hardship upon the whaling vessels touching at California ports. This was a prohibition upon the long established practice of trading a limited amount of goods for needed supplies;[16] and was doubtless justified, as the privilege had been greatly abused, both to the detriment of the regular trade and the loss of revenue receipts.[17] At least one instance, however, is recorded where, if the captain's complaint be true, the new edict caused much inconvenience if not actual suffering.[18] The subject was reported by Larkin to the state department and was considered of sufficient importance to receive the notice of the President.[19] But, as a matter of fact, the new law seems to have had only a short existence; and whalers found little difficulty, after the first few months, in securing their share of the California trade.[20]

Various other occurrences during their period that had some bearing upon the American interests were the arrival of John C. Frémont at Sutter's Fort early in the spring of 1844 on his second exploring expedition;[21] the return of Lansford W. Hastings to the United States to encourage further emigration to Cali-

[15]Larkin to Secretary of State, Sept. 16, 1844. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 10; same to same, Oct. 16; Bancroft, XXI, 376-377.

[16]Larkin to Calhoun, Aug. 24, 1844. MS., State Department; same to United States Minister in Mexico, Aug. 14, 1844. *Ibid.*

[17]Bancroft, XXI, 376.

[18]Thos. A. Norton, captain of the *Chas. W. Morgan*, to Consul Larkin, Aug. 12, 1844—Has just put into port after a cruise of thirty-four months. Men down with scurvy—custom of *all* ports in Pacific to allow whalers to sell goods and reprovision—will work a great hardship if denied him at San Francisco (Larkin *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 13). Larkin sent this letter to Governor Micheltorena.

[19]Calhoun to Larkin, Dec. 28, 1844. *Ibid.*, No. 303. It was brought by the president in turn to the attention of Congress.

[20]Larkin to Calhoun, Aug. 19, 1844. MS., State Department; same to Henry Lindsey, Editor of the New Bedford *Whaleman's Shipping List*, Dec. 11. Larkin *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 11.

[21]Sutter to Larkin, March 28, 1844. Larkin MSS., II, No. 73. Frémont reached New Helvetia March 6.

fornia, in order to bring about its separation from Mexico; and the revolt of the native Californians against the Mexican governor, Micheltorena. As all of these incidents receive subsequent mention they need not detain us here, and we shall pass on to a consideration of Polk's diplomatic attempts to secure the province.

Announcement of Polk's Policy.—When Polk came into office on the 4th of March, 1845, the attention of the American people, as has been shown, had already turned toward California.[22] Two presidents, Jackson and Tyler, had made earnest efforts to purchase it from Mexico, in the name of the United States. It is not surprising, then, to find the annexation of this province figuring as one of the four important measures which the new President, even before his inauguration, had set his heart upon carrying into effect.[23] Polk's intentions, moreover, were not long kept to himself. Official announcement of his desire to acquire California was made to the cabinet on September 16;[24] and the day following, the Washington correspondent of the New Orleans *Picayune* wrote: "It is predicted that Mr. Polk's administration will be signalized by the settlement of the Oregon question satisfactory to the American people; by the peaceful acquisition of the Californias, and by the adjustment of all our claims upon Mexico."[25]

For the accomplishment of this plan of annexation, four possible methods presented themselves—(1) By direct purchase from Mexico; (2) by revolt of the Californians, aided by resident Americans, against Mexico, and a request for admission into the United States; (3) by quiet delay, until a stimulated emigration from this country should overrun the province and declare its independence, even against the wishes of the Californians; (4)

[22]It was a singular coincidence, if nothing more, that caused the editor of the New York *Journal of Commerce* to publish in his paper of March 5, directly beneath Polk's inaugural address, an article headed, "*California Coming.*"

[23]The remaining three were the settlement of the Oregon boundary line, a reduction of the tariff, and the establishment of a subtreasury. See Edward G. Bourne, *Essays in Historical Criticism* (Yale bicentennial publications, II), 229; and various other authorities.

[24]*The Diary of James K. Polk*, edited by Milo M. Quaife, Chicago Historical Society's Collections, Vol. VI (Chicago. A. C. McClurg & Co. 1910), I, 34.

[25]New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Sept. 27, 1845.

by forcible seizure of the territory in case of an outbreak of war, for whatever cause, with Mexico.

Polk did not lose much time after his accession to office in putting the first of these methods to a practical test. On March 6, General Almonte, the Mexican minister, demanded his passports because of the passage of the joint resolution for the admission of Texas; while Wilson Shannon, much to the regret of his own government, assumed the responsibility of breaking off diplomatic relations with Mexico because of his treatment at the hands of the minister of foreign affairs.[26]

Appointment of Parrott.—Almonte left New York on April 3, and on the same ship went Polk's confidential agent, William S. Parrott, for the purpose of securing Mexico's consent to the reception of a minister from the United States.[27] The choice of Parrott for this mission was ill-advised.[28] He had been a resident of Mexico for some years but apparently had little else to recommend him. On the contrary his record there had been anything but favorable. As one of the creditors against the Mexican government in 1842, he had put in a claim that Thompson, his own countryman, had characterized as "exaggerated to a disgusting degree."[29] His business dealings had also brought him into some disrepute even with men of his own nationality.[30] Furthermore, though this cannot be held wholly to his account, he was suspected of bringing with him authority to spend a million dollars in bribing Mexican officials.[31] And altogether he was a person very much disliked in the southern Republic.[32]

In spite of this handicap, however, and the more serious one

[26]*The Works of James Buchanan* (collected and edited by John Bassett Moore. Philadelphia and London. J. B. Lippincott Company. 1909), VI, 134-135.

[27]Reeves, *American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk*, 269. For the full text of Parrott's instructions see Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 132-134.

[28]Reeves, 269.

[29]Thompson to Webster, Nov. 30, 1842. MS., State Department.

[30]Larkin-Parrott Correspondence. Larkin MSS., *passim*.

[31]Black to Buchanan, July 3, 1845. MS., State Department.

[32]Black to Slidell, Dec. 25, 1845—"The Mexican ministry positively refuse to receive Parrott as Secretary of Legation." MS., State Department.

Polk's choice of confidential agent would have been much more suitable had he selected either Black, the American consul at Mexico City, or Dimond, who filled a like position at Vera Cruz.

that the purpose of his coming was openly proclaimed in Mexico,[33] Parrott managed after a fashion to fulfill his mission. On August 26, he wrote Buchanan that an envoy of the United States with proper abilities might "with comparative ease settle *over a breakfast* the most important national question," and that such a commissioner was almost daily expected.[34] As this opinion was confirmed by later dispatches from Dimond and Black,[35] the American consuls, the President and his cabinet resolved to send John Slidell of Louisiana secretly to Mexico, as the official representative of this Government.

Failure of Slidell's Mission.—The real purpose of Slidell's appointment, as announced at this time by Polk, was the purchase of Upper California and New Mexico. These, the President thought, might be obtained for fifteen or twenty millions of dollars; but he was willing to give twice the latter amount, if necessary. Indeed, Polk considered the worth of the territory involved, to the United States, as almost beyond reckoning in mere financial terms. With this appraisement the cabinet unanimously agreed.[36]

The day following the decision to attempt the reopening of diplomatic intercourse with Mexico, however, less reassuring reports from that country caused a temporary stay in the proceedings. And it was deemed best to delay Slidell's departure until the receipt of official assurance from the Mexican government, or at least of very definite information from the administration's agents, regarding his reception.[37] Black, accordingly, was instructed to secure a definite pledge from those in authority that an American minister, if sent, should not be rejected, while Slidell was told

[33] Reeves, 270.

[34] Parrott to Buchanan, Aug. 26. MS., State Department; also Reeves, 271.

[35] Polk, *Diary*, I, 34.

[36] *Ibid.*, I, 34-35.
The line desired by Polk ran up the Rio Grande to El Paso and thence west to the Pacific. For the instructions to Slidell, however, see below, p. 129. If Jackson's offer, as Adams said, was only $500,000 for the more valuable part of this territory but ten years before, one is tempted to think the present day promoters of California real estate are not without historical example for their claims.

[37] *Ibid.*, 35-36, entry for Sept. 17.

of his selection for the mission and instructed to hold himself ready for secret departure at a moment's notice.[38]

On November 6 despatches were received through Commodore Connor, commanding the United States Squadron in the Gulf of Mexico, that Mexico was ready to renew friendly relations and "receive a Minister from the U. States."[39] The President and secretary of state, therefore, decided to send Slidell at once, and agreed upon the general character of his instructions, which the latter drafted in rough form for cabinet discussion.[40] Two days later, Parrott arrived from Mexico with the original note of the secretary of foreign affairs, agreeing to the reception of a diplomatic agent from the United States; and also with assurances that the question of boundaries could be adjusted with Mexico in a satisfactory manner.[41] That same night a commission as "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Mexico," and official instructions were forwarded by special bearer to Slidell at Pensacola.[42]

These instructions, which had been agreed to unanimously by the cabinet, were of considerable length and, except as they relate to California, need not detain us here.[43] In regard to that territory, however, Buchanan wrote: "There is another subject of vast importance to the United States, which will demand your particular attention."[44] . . .

The government of California is now but nominally dependent on Mexico; and it is more than doubtful whether her authority will ever be reinstated. Under these circumstances, it is the de-

[38] *Ibid.;* also Buchanan to Black, Sept. 17. Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 260-261. Slidell was dubious as to his reception in Mexico, but prepared to leave whenever word should reach him from Washington. Slidell to Buchanan, Sept. 25, *Ibid.*, 264-265.

[39] Polk, *Diary*, I, 91. The quotation is important owing to the subsequent rejection of Slidell because of the wording of his commission. It is evident that Polk thought the Mexican government, as here stated, had agreed to receive him as *minister*. But see Tyler's, *Tylers*, III, 176-177.

[40] Polk, *Diary*, I, 91-92. A partial draft of these had already been prepared. *Ibid;* also entry for Sept. 22.

[41] *Ibid.*, 93.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] "His instructions were chiefly verbal." Schouler, *History of the United States*, V, 525. On the contrary, they were carefully written out and very explicit, filling twelve pages in printed form, of Buchanan's *Works*.

[44] For this omission, see Chapter V.

sire of the President that you shall use your best efforts to obtain a cession of that Province from Mexico to the United States. . . . Money would be no object when compared with the value of this acquisition. . . . The President would not hesitate to give, in addition to the assumption of the just claims of our citizens on Mexico, twenty-five millions of dollars for the cession.[45]

This offer of twenty-five millions, continued the instructions, was to be made for a line extending west from the southern boundary of New Mexico; or for any line that should include Monterey within the territory ceded to the United States. If this could not be obtained twenty millions were to be offered for a boundary "commencing at any point on the western line of New Mexico, and running due West to the Pacific, so as to include the bay and harbor of San Francisco." Elsewhere the importance attached to the acquisition of San Francisco by the administration was similarly shown. "The possession of the Bay and harbor of San Francisco," Slidell had been told, "is all important to the United States. The advantages to us of its acquisition are so striking that it would be a waste of time to enumerate them here." It is well to remember this in connection with the question of the influence of slavery upon Polk's determination to possess California.

The difficulties Slidell met with in Mexico and his final rejection by the Paredes government are too well known to require mention at this time.[46] His despatches to the state department relating to California, also, for the most part belong to a subsequent discussion. It should be noted, however, that a certain phase of the administration's policy received considerable emphasis at this time. On December 17, Buchanan sent a communication to Slidell again urging upon him the importance of securing the cession of the California territory specified in his instruc-

[45]For complete instructions, see Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 294-306. The part relating to California is on pp. 304-306.

[46]For Slidell's course in Mexico, see Reeves, 282-287; Schouler, V, 525-526; Jay, *Mexican War*, 211-220 (an account biased as usual); Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, II, 53-80 (perhaps the best account.) Slidell's desire to hasten his recognition by the Mexican government can be fairly accounted for on two grounds—his wish to be recognized by the Herrera administration before it should be turned out of office; and the urging of the president, who desired to end the uncertain condition of affairs with Mexico before the adjournment of Congress. Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 312.

tions, as it "would secure incalculable advantages" to the United States. At the same time he was authorized to make the payment of six millions of dollars, cash, upon the exchange of treaty ratifications.[47]

In February, after Slidell had left Mexico City, there seemed to be some prospect of making good use of this cash payment plan because of the pressing financial needs of the new government. "Aware that financial embarrassments alone can induce those in power to enter upon negotiations with the United States," wrote Slidell on the 6th, "I took care before leaving the Capital to convey through a person having confidential relations with the President a hint that those embarrassments might be relieved if satisfactory arrangements for boundary should be made."[48]

To this Buchanan replied that the United States would readily come to the assistance of Paredes, if he should bring about a satisfactory settlement of the boundary question; and that funds would be available immediately for the Mexican President upon the ratification of the treaty by his government.[49] A few days later Polk took preliminary steps to have such funds as might be necessary for the carrying out of this purpose placed at his disposal by confidentially arranging with C. J. Ingersoll, chairman of the house committee on foreign affairs, and with Representative Cullom of Tennessee to introduce a bill authorizing a million dollars for this object, if at any time such method of procedure should be deemed advisable.[50] Here, then, we have the beginning of a policy the administration was to follow pretty consistently throughout the whole course of the Mexican War. It was embodied, it is scarcely necessary to remark, in the "two million" and "three million" bills of Wilmot Proviso fame; and, indirectly, in the return of Santa Anna.

But before this despatch reached Slidell, he was on his way home, thoroughly disgusted and disgruntled with the tortuous course of Mexican diplomacy. Polk had failed in his attempt to

[47] Buchanan to Slidell, *Ibid.*, 345; see also Polk, *Diary*, I, 125.
[48] Slidell to Buchanan, Feb. 6, 1846. MS., State Department.
[49] Buchanan to Slidell, March 12. Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 403.
[50] Polk, *Diary*, I, 303, entry for March 25. Polk had probably already interviewed Ingersoll on the subject a week previously. *Ibid.*; and entry for March 18, page 282.

purchase California as Jackson and Tyler had failed before him, and for precisely the same reason, namely, the fear of the ruling faction in Mexico that any alienation of territory would be followed by a revolution before which they would go down in ruin.[51]

Demoralized situation in California.—Though nothing had come of Slidell's attempt to secure California by negotiation, Polk's line of effort, as has been said, was by no means limited to this one method. Even while his minister was seeking to obtain recognition from the Mexican government, the President was setting another agency at work to bring about the desired acquisition. But before considering what may be called Polk's internal policy regarding California, we must devote some space to the conditions existing there, especially with respect to the feeling of the inhabitants toward Mexico, and the significance of American immigration.

At the time Polk came into office, affairs were in such a state in California that it was generally recognized that the native leaders would soon throw off allegiance to Mexico and attempt an independent government or seek the protection of some more powerful nation, either the United States, England, or France. The hold of Mexico was miserably weak and ineffective. Internal discords and national debility rendered the task of preserving her own autonomy sufficiently difficult, and made the just government or adequate protection of so distant a province impossible. Upon this point there is universal agreement among writers. Sir George Simpson, describing California as it was in 1842, has given an unexaggerated picture of the lack of intercourse between the parent government and her political offspring.

"From what has been said," he writes near the close of his book,

> It will not appear strange that the intercourse between California and Mexico has never been active. . . . Mexico has more intercourse with China than with California. . . . Advices are not received in Mexico from Monterey above once or twice in a year. The last deputy elected by California to the Mexican Con-

[51] President Herrera asserted that the mere willingness to listen to Slidell's propositions had served as sufficient pretext for inciting the revolution that caused his overthrow. See a letter from Herrera, cited by Cass in the senate, on March 27, 1848. *Cong. Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., page 493.

gress informed me that during the two years he served, he only received two letters from California while in Mexico.[52]

Wilkes, too, on his voyage of exploration, though "prepared for anarchy and confusion" was surprised to find "a total absence of all government in California and even its form and ceremonies thrown aside."[53]

Nor was the military oversight exercised by Mexico any more efficient than the political. The fort at Monterey, the capital, and port of entry for the whole province, had not sufficient powder to salute the vessel upon which Simpson was a passenger, but had to borrow from the ship itself for the purpose.[54] Guarding the long inland reaches of San Francisco Bay, "where all the navies of the world might ride in safety," and through whose gates men thought the commerce of the east would shortly pass, Wilkes found a garrison of a single officer, in charge of a single barefooted private, and the former was absent when Wilkes arrived.[55] The naval force consisted of but one vessel. That mounted no gun of any kind, and was so poorly manned that it could not make progress beating against the wind.[56]

Further citations might be made, almost *ad libitum*, to show the complete neglect of the civil and military needs of California by the home government. But these would be useless. The local officials, continually appealing for aid, were met with nothing more substantial than promises, exhortations to defend the country themselves from threatened dangers; or, as we shall see presently, with that which was worse than even this utter lack of assistance.[57]

Revolution against Micheltorena.—Under such circumstances it is not surprising to find the Californians setting aside Mexican

[52]Sir George Simpson, *Narrative of a voyage around the world during the years 1841 and 1842.* (London. 1847), I, 298-299. Simpson was governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

[53]Wilkes, *Narrative*, V, 163.

[54]Simpson, *Narrative*, I, 190.

[55]Wilkes, *Narrative*, V, 152.

[56]Simpson, *Narrative*, I, 197.

[57]For example: Commandancia General to Ministro de Guerra y Marina, April 25, 1840 (Vallejo, *Documentos*, IX, No. 124); Vallejo to Ministro de Guerra, May 18, 1841 (*Ibid.*, No. 147); Alvarado to Vallejo, Nov. 30, 1841 (*Ibid.*, No. 369): Bustamente to Vallejo, April 25, 1840—Government trusts in his ability to defend the province from invasion. Civil war in Mexico prevents aid being sent immediately (*Ibid.*, No. 122).

laws whenever it suited their fancy, and almost as frequently deposing the governor sent out by the supreme government.[58] The revolution of 1836, resulting in the overthrow of Gutierrez, has already been mentioned. But this was only one of a numerous series. One writer has remarked that between 1831 and 1841, the government of California changed hands on an average of once a year; while the province not infrequently was "blessed with two governors at a time and once with triplets."[59]

The period between 1841 and the occupation of Monterey by Commodore Sloat, was scarcely less free than the decade just mentioned from civil disturbances. In 1842, General Micheltorena was sent from Mexico as governor, with an "army" for the defense of the province. The army consisted of some two or three hundred choice spirits picked, for the most part, from the national jails, and was a cause of constant bitterness and annoyance, even of actual fear, to the Californians.[60]

"Not one individual among them," said Robinson, who was present in California when the battalion arrived, "possessed a jacket or pantaloons; but naked and like savage Indians, they concealed their nudity with dirty, miserable blankets."[61] And what was even worse, he adds, a drill by daylight was usually followed by thieving expeditions at night. So that the general feeling in California over this latest acquisition from Mexico was similar to that of a former Governor of the province, who wrote respecting the colonists sent by Spain to aid in the settlement of the country, that, to take a charitable view of the subject, their absence

[58]Dana noted the wretched policy pursued by Mexico in the character of men she sent out as officials. "The administradores," he wrote, "are strangers sent from Mexico, having no interest in the country; not identified in any way with their charge, and for the most part, men of desperate fortunes—broken down politicians and soldiers,—whose only object is to retrieve their condition as soon as possible. *Two Years before the Mast*, 195.

[59]J. M. Guinn, *Capture of Monterey* in Historical Society of Southern California, *Publications*, III, 70.

One is reminded by this of Houston's declaration that Mexico had seen three revolutions in twelve months, and Benton's interjection, "She has had seventeen in twenty-five years." *Cong. Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 sess., 459.

[60]Larkin to Secretary of State, Sept. 16, 1844. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 10. Jones to Larkin, Oct. 22, 1842—Thinks Mexico is going to make California the Botany Bay of America. Larkin MSS., I, No. 354. See also Nos. 364-367, for further discussion.

[61]Robinson, *Life in California*, 207.

"for a couple of centuries, at a distance of a million of leagues would prove beneficial to the province and redound to the service of God and the glory of the king."[62]

The presence of Micheltorena's thieving soldiers and the general character of his rule soon furnished the California leaders, Castro and Alvarado, an excuse for revolt. The first outbreak occurred in November, 1844; and on December 1st, Micheltorena signed a treaty binding himself to ship his undesirable followers out of the country within three months. The agreement, however, was not kept, and the Californians again took up arms. With the details of this revolution we have no concern, except to note the rather curious fact that of the foreigner residents who took any part at all in it, some joined with Micheltorena, and some with Castro and Alvarado. In the single battle of the campaign, however, they did no actual fighting on either side, as the list of casualties for the whole day's encounter—two horses killed by the one force and a mule wounded by the other—fully testifies.[63]

After this slaughter, Micheltorena was ready to capitulate, and in March, 1845, left California with the most of his ragged soldiery.[64] Although there were rumors at the time that this revolt was aimed to bring about separation from Mexico, these probably contained little truth. The Californians desired freedom in local affairs; and many of them cherished no great love for Mexico; but they hesitated to abrogate her authority entirely, not feeling strong enough to stand alone and fearing lest the protection afforded by a stronger power might prove more of a calamity than the neglect of Mexico.[65] In the northern part of the province, nevertheless, men of influence were driven by the desperate condition of affairs into recognizing the necessity of some radical change, either along

[62]Blackmar, *Spanish Colonization in the Southwest* in Johns Hopkins University Studies, VIII, 183.

[63]For complete description, see Bancroft, XXI, 455-517.

[64]I. C. Jones to Larkin, Feb. 26, 1845. Larkin MSS., III, No. 37. Upon his arrival in Mexico, Micheltorena represented his expulsion as an act for which Americans were largely responsible. Bancroft, XXI, 513. This aroused considerable bitterness against the United States. Shannon to Calhoun, April 6, 1845. MS., State Department.

[65]Bidwell (*California*, 139), speaks of the "anomalous position" of the Californians, "as enemies to the United States as Mexicans, enemies to Mexico as regarded their local government, afraid of the former, not able to rely upon the latter, and not strong enough in themselves for independence."

the lines of complete independence or of coming under the protection of a more stable government than that of Mexico.

This feeling was greatly increased by the internal discord that prevailed even after the departure of the Mexican governor. Pio Pico, one of the southern leaders against Micheltorena, was chosen by vote of the assembly to take his place; while José Castro held the office of comandante general. Between these two, the latter representing the party of the north, the former the party of the south, peace was destined to be short lived. The removal of the capital from Monterey to Los Angeles, and the resultant separation of the civil offices by a distance of more than four hundred miles from the military headquarters, custom house, and treasury, made harmony among the native authorities still more unlikely.

During the summer of 1845 various dissensions arose. Civil war seemed imminent, and especially to foreign residents and Californians with property at stake the outlook was most discouraging.[86] "The country never was in a more disorderly, miserable condition than at the present moment," wrote a friend to Alfred Robinson, who was then in New York, "we have no government. Pio Pico who was nominally governor has been arrested and imprisoned. The people at the north, as usual, are opposed to those of the south, and will be satisfied by none other than Alvarado for chief magistrate."[87]

Such disorganization and political uncertainty, together with the lax control exercised by Mexico, and the actual hostility to her interference in local affairs, had a three-fold result. Many of the Californians became reconciled to exchanging their allegiance to Mexico for any form of government that furnished protection and peace; it became generally recognized by those outside of California that the time was near for some such change to take place; and, finally, Polk was led to take active measures to bring the separation, when it came, to good account for the United States.

[86] Jones-Larkin correspondence during this period (Larkin MSS.); Juan B. Alvarado, *Historia de California* (MSS., Bancroft Collection), II, 130-131; Bancroft, XXI, 518-543; *Ibid.*, XXII, 30 *et seq.* Prefect Manuel Castro to Andrés Castillero, Dec. 10, 1845, concerning measures to prevent civil war. Castro, *Documentos*, I, No. 238.

[87] Robinson, *Life in California*, 213-214.

Chapter IV

Events Immediately Preceding the Outbreak of the Mexican War

As the political conditions in California were favorable to the American interests during the opening months of Polk's administration, so also was the influx of immigration from across the mountains. From the chance and temporary bands of hunters who followed Jedediah Smith and the Patties, this movement had grown in 1844 to the organized companies of Bartleson and Kelsey. A year later the tide had come to a full head and the annual arrivals were numbered by the hundreds.

Frémont's report.—Then, as now, California had her publicity agents whose duty it was to attract settlers. By order of the government, Frémont, whose second exploring expedition[1] had led him across the Sierras,[2] published a report of his wanderings during the first part of 1845. His book was immediately seized upon by a public hungering for news of the regions west of the Rocky Mountains.[3] Written in a terse and interesting style, it at once brought its author into prominence and drew the attention of hundreds of readers to the country of which he wrote.

Though only a portion of the complete report dealt with California,[4] no other part was equal to this in graphic description.

[1] Frémont's first expedition had taken place in 1842 but had gone no farther than the South Pass and Frémont's Peak in the Rocky Mountains.

[2] *Report of the Exploring Expedition in the year 1842 and to Oregon and North California in the years 1843-44*, by Brevet Capt. J. C. Frémont . . . printed by order of the House of Representatives (Washington, Blair, and Reeves, 1845), 228-229; Larkin to the State Department, April 12, 1844, enclosing a letter from Sutter. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 3.

[3] The report ran through four editions within two years. It is interesting to note that one of Frémont's chief objects was to discover whether or not the mythical Buenaventura River flowed from the basin east of the Rocky Mountains into the Pacific, thus opening up a waterway for the western outlet of the Mississippi Valley and a transcontinental route for the Chinese trade. Because no such river was found to exist he placed much more importance on obtaining the Columbia for the United States. *Report*, 255-256.

[4] The description of Frémont's passage of the Sierras and his stay in California occupies pages 229-256 of the *Report*.

After a month of constant battle with the snows and starvation of the mountains,[5] Frémont and his party had reached the valley of the Sacramento at a time of the year when it was to be seen at its best. The contrast between the life and death struggle in the Sierras and this land of grass and flowers, well watered and timbered, full of game, and with the same "deep-blue sky and sunny climate of Smyrna and Palermo," was most dramatic in its appeal to the imagination.[6] One does not wonder that visitors, eager to hear more of this new land, so crowded upon the American explorer that he was compelled to secure a separate building for his workshop;[7] while Webster, still the friend of annexation, invited him to dine and "talk about California."[8]

Magazine and newspaper activities.—But Frémont was only one of a numerous band of writers who sang the praises of California, and preached, either directly or indirectly, its acquisition during this period. Alfred Robinson (whose book has already been quoted in these pages) published his *Life in California*, during the early part of 1846. The author had been for many years a resident of the country of which he wrote, as agent for the large Boston firm of Bryant and Sturgis, and his work at once found wide popularity. Its influence upon the public—and the same may be said of most of the contemporaneous writings of a similar nature—is shown by the following extract from a review of that day in Hunt's *Merchants' Magazine*, which also gives us pretty accurately the spirit of the time regarding California.

[5] Two men went temporarily insane; half their mules were killed for food. *Report*, 229-244. Sutter wrote to Larkin, March 28, 1844, ". . . for a month . . . the company had subsisted entirely on horse or mule flesh—the starvation and fatigue they had endured rendered them truly deplorable objects." *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 3. The passage of the mountains occupied nearly a month. The party reached Sutter's March 6th.

[6] Frémont's description of California cannot be given by separate quotations. The whole of it must be read to be appreciated. One sentence, written after his departure, may be cited merely as an example. "One might travel the world over," he wrote, "without finding a valley more fresh and verdant—more floral and sylvan—more alive with birds and animals—more bounteously watered—than we had left in the San Joaquin." *Report*, 256.

[7] John Charles Frémont, *Memoirs of My Life* (Chicago and New York. Bedford, Clarke and Company, 1887), I, 413.

[8] *Ibid.*, 420.

"When we reflect," said the writer, after speaking of the importance of California to the United States,

that this superb region is adequate to the sustaining of twenty millions of people; has for several hundred years been in the possession of an indolent and limited population, incapable from their character of appreciating its resources—that no improvement can be expected under its present control, we cannot but hope that thousands of our fellow countrymen will pour in and accelerate the happy period (which the work before us assures us cannot be distant) when Alta California will become part and parcel of our great confederation; and the cry of Oregon is only a precursor to the actual settlement of this more southern, more beautiful and far more valuable region.[9]

But California was not compelled to rely altogether upon such formal publications, as we have mentioned, for publicity. Americans residing there wrote constantly to friends at home or to the newspapers of "the States" in such a vein as was best calculated to attract the attention of future emigrants.[10] Emphasis in these communications, as usual, was laid upon the advantages of California from commercial and agricultural standpoints, San Francisco, especially, being held up as a necessary possession for the welfare of the United States. And, in addition, assurances were given that nothing stood in the way of those desiring to settle in the new region, either in the nature of passports, or of difficulties in securing land.

"A foreigner," said an authoritative article in the New York *Sun*, "can become a citizen of California by obtaining two signatures to his petition. He then possesses the right to take up vacant land, and may secure as much as eleven square leagues upon the payment of $26 in fees. Many grants held by such owners are 33 miles long and 3 miles wide."[11] "The fertile plains of Oregon and California," said another communication to the same paper, "are resounding with the busy hum of industry; all around us are the germs of empire, prosperity and wealth. Those who would reap a harvest should come out young, secure their lands, and in ten years they will have their fortunes."[12]

[9] Hunt's *Merchants' Magazine*, April, 1846, 350-353.

[10] Larkin, John Marsh, and Hastings were especially active in this respect.

[11] Larkin to N. Y. *Sun*, May 28, 1845. Larkin MSS., III, 168.

[12] N. Y. *Sun*, Oct. (?), 1845; quoted in the Washington *Daily Union*, Oct. 11.

These articles descriptive of California and urging its annexation to the United States, were not confined to the papers of any one locality or party. The New York *Journal of Commerce* of March 5, contained an article entitled, "California Coming," which declared the advantages to be gained from an acquisition of that territory would prove as great as those derived from the annexation of Texas and asserted that throughout the country there was general agreement as to the advisability of securing it.[13] "Information in regard to this favored portion of the globe," said the New Orleans *Courier*, in referring to California, "is eagerly sought after by our citizens as it is destined ere long to be annexed to the United States.[14] And even the *American Review*, the stanch organ of the Whigs, in a long and carefully written article urged the importance of securing California for the commercial and agricultural advantages that would thereby result to this government; and because of the inability of Mexico to make use of its resources.[15]

The New York papers, especially the *Sun*, *Herald*, and *Journal of Commerce*, were among the most active of the publications in keeping California before the public eye. They took pains to print any article coming within their notice regarding it; and, in addition, had a regular correspondent living in Monterey in the person of Thomas O. Larkin.[16] Indeed, it may be said without fear of exaggeration, that most of the communications published in these three papers on the subject of California originated with Larkin. And, owing to the custom of "exchange" prevalent at

[13]New York *Journal of Commerce*, March 5, 1845; copied also in Charleston *Mercury*, March 10.

[14]Quoted in *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 162.

[15]*American Review*, Jan., 1846; see also comment upon this in Richmond *Enquirer*, Jan. 26.

[16]Larkin to *Journal of Commerce*, July 31, 1845 (Larkin MSS., III, No. 235). Same to James G. Bennett of the New York *Herald*, May 26, 1846 (*Ibid.*, IV, No. 129); N. Y. *Herald* to Larkin, Oct. 14, 1845 (*Ibid.*, No. 306); Hudson [for Bennett] to Childs [Larkin's brother-in-law in Washington], Dec. 5, 1846—"When you write to Mr. Larkin . . . please say . . . that so far as we can we will take care of California. We have always been in favor of the acquisition of that territory" (*Ibid.*, No. 337); see also Polk's *Diary*, I, 126-127. Larkin's communications were likewise sent to the Boston *Daily Advertiser*.

the time, most of these found space in other journals throughout the country.[17]

Proposed railroad to California.—The interest of the *Sun* in this subject was rather strikingly shown by a letter from one of its editors, A. E. Beach, to his correspondent mentioned above. After thanking Larkin for the valuable information already furnished, Beach continued:

> News from your quarter is looked for with deep interest here. Just now there are strong opinions that California will be joined to the United States. . . . We flatter ourselves that the *New York Sun*, will, if such a thing be possible, cause the measure to be carried into execution. Texas, owing almost entirely to the influence of this paper, has been annexed, and now, our editors say, "Why not California?" A letter which you wrote us some time since describing Monterey and harbor . . . seemed to have acted strongly on the public mind, and owing to what we have since said, they now look with a longing eye toward California. We have urged the purchase of it and that the contemplated railroad to Oregon should be turned to Monterey.
>
> We wish, if convenient, you would give us your opinion of having a R. R. to Monterey and tell us where would be the best point to have it terminate.
>
> You may judge what influence we have, from the fact that since we have spoken of Monterey as the terminus several persons are on the eve of starting for that place to purchase lands.[18]

This railroad project mentioned by Beach was at that time a subject of considerable speculation throughout the country, and the idea of securing the rich trade of China and the Sandwich Islands, without the long journey around the Horn, appealed to all those interested in commercial ventures. Asa Whitney's plan for a transcontinental line to Oregon received much attention and was laid before Congress near the close of October, 1845.[19] Many, however, who believed in the ultimate success of the undertaking, as in the case of the editor of the New York paper, advocated

[17]For example, Larkin's letter of July 31 to the *Journal of Commerce* was reprinted from that paper in the Washington *Daily Union* of Oct. 21, 1845, and in the Charleston *Mercury* of Oct. 22. In how many other papers it appeared cannot be stated.

[18]Beach to Larkin, Dec. 24, 1845. Larkin MSS., III, No. 307.

[19]Letter of Whitney printed in Washington *Daily Union*, Feb. 6, 1846.

Monterey or San Francisco as the terminus,[20] thereby making the acquisition of these communities by the United States still more desirable.

Increased Immigration.—The western papers, in addition to such descriptions as were contained in those of the eastern states, were concerned with the actual organization and departure of emigrant companies.[21] Any report of the discovery of a shorter route to the new land at once received public notice;[22] while not infrequently such an advertisement as the following made its appearance in a local paper, to be copied by many another western editor:

"Emigration" (read the headline of this sample notice)

For California—A large party of settlers propose leaving Arkansas for California, next May.[23] The chairman of the Committee of Arrangements gives notice in the Little Rock Gazette that the Californians will rendezvous at Fort Smith, Arkansas, on the first Monday in April next, preparatory to taking up the line of march for the Pacific Coast. Every person starting is expected to be well armed with a rifle or heavy shot-gun, 16 pounds of shot or lead, 4 pounds of powder, etc.[24]

[20] *Daily Union*, Oct. 16, 1845, giving an outline of transcontinental routes, as follows: 1. Canal across the Isthmus of Darien. 2. Railroad along the Rio del Norte to San Francisco. 3. Line from St. Louis through the Rocky Mts. to Oregon ("California is henceforth to be the promised land to the emigrant seeking a home on the Pacific"). The New Orleans *Picayune* of Nov. 22 had a statement from Albert M. Gilliam, "late U. S. consul at California"—[Gilliam was appointed for San Francisco but never assumed his duties]—that California would soon fall into Anglo-Saxon hands and a railroad would be needed to terminate at San Francisco.

[21] Extracts upon this subject from the St. Louis *New Era*, the Burlington *Hawkeye*, the St. Louis *Reporter*, the Missouri *Era*, were printed in the single issue of the *Daily Union* for May 20, 1845.

[22] Extract from the *Western Expositor* stating that Frémont's return from California would probably result in the discovery of a route 300 or 400 miles shorter than the one already in use, and the saving of two months' time on the trip. *Daily Union*, July 31, 1845; New Orleans *Picayune*, April 22, 1846.

[23] Parties for California always left in the spring in order to cross the mountains during the summer, and arrived in California during the fall. A late passage of the Sierras was accompanied with great danger, as for example, in the case of the Donner party.

[24] *Daily Union*, Jan. 9, 1846. This project had been conceived some time before; 1000 persons were to be enlisted, their goods shipped by sea while they themselves went overland. *Ibid.*, Sept. 17, 1845.

As a result of all this publicity, emigration to California received a decided impetus. In May, 1845, it was commonly reported that 7000 persons had assembled at Independence, Missouri, ready to take the road to Oregon and California.[25] In November, Larkin informed the state department that some three hundred or four hundred of this company had arrived at the headwaters of San Francisco Bay.[26] From this time on, arrivals continued in a steady stream; while exaggerated rumors of future immigration were flying thickly through the province.

As early as July 15, Sutter had predicted the arrival of "more as 1000 Souls" within six or eight weeks.[27] Marsh was confident that two thousand immigrants would shortly be in the territory.[28] Stephen Smith, writing to Calhoun from Bodega, placed the number actually on the border at one thousand.[29] And a little later a report reached Larkin that the number would soon be increased by ten or twenty thousand, though the writer added that he himself did not believe more than two or three thousand would really come.[30]

Mention has been made of the emigration from Oregon to California in the years previous to 1845. The same movement continued to supply the latter territory with much of its American population. Many of these came directly from the northern country; others starting originally for the Columbia, decided *en route* to change their destination to California.[31] The usual division point for such parties was at Fort Hall, which still remained in

[25] *Daily Union*, May 20, 1845; Robinson [from N. Y.] to Larkin, May 29. Larkin MSS., III, No. 170.

[26] Larkin to Secretary of State, Nov. 4, 1845 (*Official Correspondence*, Part II, No. 28); also same to same, June 16, 1846 (*Ibid.*, 94-96); same to F. M. Dimond, United States consul at Vera Cruz, March 1, 1846 (*Ibid.*, No. 91); same to United States minister at Mexico, April 3, 1846 (*Ibid.*, No. 78).

[27] Sutter to Larkin (Larkin MSS., III, No. 220); same to same, Oct. 8, 1845. Thousands coming within the year. Mexico cannot stem the stream; if she tried they would "fight like Lyons." *Ibid.*, No. 315.

[28] Marsh to Larkin, Aug. 12. *Ibid.*, No. 247.

[29] Jameson, *The Correspondence* of John C. Calhoun (Washington. American Historical Association. 1900), 1069.

[30] Sutter to Larkin, March 2, 1846 (Larkin MSS., IV, No. 53); Hastings to Larkin, March 3, 1846. *Ibid.*, No. 55.

[31] See for example statements of Ide, Swasey, and Clyman in their published works.

the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company; and it was reported that British officers at the Fort were taking a hand in this proceeding, persuading Oregon bound settlers to turn off for California in order to preserve the Columbia to England.[32] On the other hand, it should be remarked that English papers condemned the so-called emigration to Oregon, which was creating so much excitement throughout the United States, as simply a ruse for the occupation of California.[33]

Between the Americans most interested in the respective settlement of the two territories, a good deal of rivalry prevailed. Among the Oregon enthusiasts a committee was organized to counteract the representations of the California agents;[34] while the latter pursued an even more aggressive campaign in winning recruits for the colonization of the southern country.[35]

"The Texas Game."—This emigration to California, during 1845 and the first months in 1846, of which we have just been speaking, was prompted by more than a desire for mere settlement. "Once let the tide . . . flow toward California," wrote one of Larkin's New York friends, "and the American population will be sufficiently numerous to play the Texas game."[36] "Are there not enough wild Yankees in California to take the management of affairs in their own hands?" asked another, adding that the United States must eventually spread south of the 42d parallel, "as our territory on the Pacific is too narrow altogether,

[32]Letter from an Oregon immigrant to the Ohio *Patriot*, copied in the *Daily Union*, Dec. 30, 1845; also extract from Sangamon *Journal* in the *Daily Union*, Jan. 1, 1846.

[33]The London *Athenaeum*, July 11, 1846, in reviewing Robinson's *Life in California*, said that emigrants leaving ostensibly for the Willamette Valley were really bound for California and that the whole country was determined to possess San Francisco; the London *Illustrated News*, Oct. 11, 1845, said the majority of emigrants to Oregon leave as soon as possible for California; letter of Sir George Simpson in *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 393—1000 of 5000 Oregon emigrants have left for California; New Orleans *Picayune*, Aug. 7, 1845—statement to same effect.

[34]Bancroft, XXIX, 552, n.

[35]Marsh to Larkin, Aug. 12, 1845. Has seen the newspaper articles by Oregonians derogatory to California. Will write in defence a reply setting forth the merits and advantages of the province. Larkin MSS., III, No. 247.

[36]Robinson to Larkin, May 29, 1845. Larkin MSS., III, No. 170. Robinson added that the papers were filled with such suggestions.

the outlet is not sufficient for the back country."[37] A third believed two or three hundred Yankee riflemen, in conjunction with the Californians, could bring about a separation from Mexico, and suggested that as the thirty Americans taken by the British Government in the Canadian revolt and sent to New South Wales, were even then at Honolulu on their way home, they might find more congenial occupation in California than in the States.[38]

"We only want the Flag of the U. S. and a good lot of Yankees and you would soon see the immense natural riches of the country developed, and her commerce in a flourishing condition. To see that Flag planted here would be most acceptable to the Sons of Uncle Sam, and by no means repugnant to the native population,"[39] wrote Stephen Smith, who had recently been released, for lack of evidence, from a charge of conspiring to declare California independent.[40] It was probably, therefore, with some idea of fulfilling these expectations that many of the immigrants reached the province.

Proposed union with Texas.—Aside from the plan of uniting California with the United States after its separation from Mexico, the idea also prevailed of making it an independent nation, dominating the commerce of the Pacific and enriching itself from the Asiatic trade. In the early years, as we have seen, the plan had been broached of annexing it to Texas.[41] And as late as 1844,[42] Houston wrote to Murphy that a nation embracing Texas, California, Oregon and the two provinces of Chihuahua and Sonora would "not be less than a rival power to any of the nations now in existence. . . . It is impossible to look upon the map of North America and not perceive the *rationale* of the project."[43] A few months later Donelson found him awaiting the action of the United States Congress on annexation, but still revolving a plan for the increase of Texan domain, dwelling with some fond-

[37]Atherton to Larkin, March 4, 1846. *Ibid.*, IV, No. 58.

[38]Hooper to Larkin (from Honolulu), April 29, 1845. *Ibid.*, III.

[39]Smith to Calhoun, Dec. 30, 1845. Calhoun *Correspondence*, 1069.

[40]Bancroft, XXI, 601.

[41]THE QUARTERLY, XVIII, 17, n. 53.

[42]See also Green's report of Hasting's scheme, THE QUARTERLY, XVIII, 36-37.

[43]William Carey Crane, *Life and literary remains of Sam Houston of Texas* (Philadelphia. J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1884), 366-370.

ness "upon the capacity of Texas to extend her territory to the Pacific and even detach Oregon from us, because there are no Alleghanies to separate them;[44] while in April, 1845, the London *Times* was urging the adoption of a similar measure, so that the territory in question might possess "an original character and an independent existence."[45]

California and Oregon as an independent nation.—All of these schemes, however, came to an end with the annexation of Texas by the United States. But the conception of an autonomous nation, composed of Oregon and California, still proved very attractive to many minds. It was an old idea, tracing its origin back at least to 1812, when the father of American expansionists expressed his conviction that men of his own nationality would one day "spread themselves through the whole length of that coast [the Pacific], covering it with free and independent Americans, unconnected with us but by the ties of blood and interest, and employing like us the rights of self-government."[46]

The attention drawn to the whole Pacific coast by the Oregon controversy and the rapidly growing necessity for a change in the control of California, made Jefferson's prophecy appear to many the best solution for both problems. For it had long been felt that the vast distance separating Oregon and the United States, and the appalling difficulties of the route, would prevent its adequate government by the authorities at Washington. Nor did it seem possible to some minds that the western boundary of the Republic should extend beyond the Rocky Mountains.[47] To those who held such views it appeared both natural and expedient that California and Oregon should be united into a strong, independent country, settled by American emigrants, and standing on the Pacific as a sort of complementary nation to the United States.

"The situation of California," said Wilkes in his official report,

[44] Donelson to Jackson, Dec. 28, 1844. Jackson MSS.

[45] *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 205.

[46] Thomas Jefferson to John Jacob Astor, May 24, 1812 (*The writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Ford ed. New York. G. P. Putman's Sons. 1898), IX, 351.

[47] *Annals of Congress*, XI, 422-423; 598-599; Thomas H. Benton, *Thirty years' view* (New York. D. Appleton and Company, 1854), II, 430; McMaster, *History of the United States*, VII, 296-297; 300-301, and authorities quoted.

"will cause its separation from Mexico before many years. It is very probable that the country will become united with Oregon with which it will perhaps form a state that is designed to control the destiny of the Pacific."[48] A year or two later, Waddy Thompson assures us, he was told of a definite plot to separate California from Mexico and asked if the United States would be willing to surrender her title to Oregon so that that territory and California might be made into a Republic.[49] Benjamin E. Green sent much the same report to Calhoun, adding, however, that the Oregon settlers were not anxious for the plan, provided they could receive aid and encouragement from the United States in maintaining their hold upon Oregon.[50] In England, also, the idea of an independent state on the Pacific seems to have obtained some favor. Lord Ashburton wrote Webster that the power possessing Oregon and California should be independent of Great Britain and the United States, but of the English race;[51] while Louis McLane, when ambassador to England, in one of his despatches to Buchanan, spoke of the plan as having been "suggested simultaneously by certain classes on both sides of the Atlantic," adding, it may be remarked, that such an arrangement would work untold disadvantage to this government.[52]

References to this plan, likewise, were frequently met with in the debates in Congress. As late as March, 1846, in a discussion of the Oregon question, Senator Evans of Maine declared the union of that territory and California, separated as they were from the United States by an almost impassable barrier of mountains, would promote the interests of this country much more as an independent nation than as a territorial possession.[53] On the other hand, an opponent of Evans assured the senate that unless some action was speedily taken to settle the status of the region around the Columbia, the settlers there would place themselves under French or English protection, be joined by the Californians, and

[48] Wilkes' *Narrative*, V, 182-183.

[49] Thompson, *Recollections*, 232. His informant was Lansford W. Hastings.

[50] Green to Calhoun, April 11, 1844. Calhoun *Correspondence*, 946.

[51] George Bancroft to Polk, April 27, 1845. Polk MSS.

[52] McLane to Buchanan, Dec. 1, 1845. MS., State Department.

[53] *Cong. Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., p. 478.

eventually control the coast from the Isthmus of Darien to the southern boundaries of Alaska.[54]

As a local affair, the proposed union with Oregon aroused considerable speculation in California. Lansford W. Hastings had come to the province in 1842 with the express purpose, as we have seen, of bringing about its separation from Mexico and uniting it either with Texas or with Oregon, in the latter event making himself president of the new Republic.[55]

In the intervening years his time had been occupied in efforts to encourage emigration throughout the United States, and with the conducting of parties, thus organized, into California.[56] By 1845 the idea of independence and union with Oregon was frequently mentioned in the correspondence of American residents, some of whom favored it above annexation to the United States.[57] Dr. John Marsh, one of the older settlers, communicated his views at some length to Larkin, but took the ground that California must first become part of the American Union and not attempt a separate existence with Oregon until immigration should render such a step advisable.[58] Continuing, Marsh said that the settlers on the Willamette were anxious to unite with the Californians, while some expressed a desire to join with Oregon. Under such circumstances he thought it would be wise if Larkin were to feel the pulse of Alvarado on the subject; and prophesied that, if the union could be accomplished, a new empire would arise on the Pacific, whose capital located on San Francisco Bay, "possibly on the site occupied by the miserable village of Yerba Buena," would "in the next century become one of the great emporii[59] of the world."

[54] *Ibid.*, 350.

[55] Bidwell, *Life in California*, 110-112; 116; Calhoun *Correspondence*, 940 *et seq.*; Bancroft, XXI, 578.

[56] Hartnell to Wyllie, March 17, 1844. Vallejo *Documentos*, XXXII, No. 14.

[57] Stephen Reynolds (Oahu) to Larkin, April 19, 1845—Believes if California unites with the United States the nation will be too unwieldly to last (Larkin MSS., III, No. 116); Atherton to Larkin, Feb. 11, 1845. *Ibid.*, No. 25.

[58] Marsh to Larkin. Larkin MSS., III, No. 247. Marsh included the territory north of the Columbia in his scheme, perhaps as far as the 54th parallel. From the tone of this letter Larkin had evidently expressed himself in favor of the Oregon union.

[59] Marsh was a Harvard College graduate.

Rumors of Mormon Hegira.—In addition to this plan of uniting Oregon and California, another movement was reported to be on foot in the United States that would result in the separation of the latter from Mexico. "California now offers a field for the prettiest enterprise that has been undertaken in modern times," Governor Ford is said to have written to Brigham Young, leader of the Mormons, early in 1845. "Why should it not be a pretty operation for your people to go out there, take possession of and capture a portion of that vacant country and establish an independent government of your own, subject only to the laws of nations?"[60]

Whether, as appears very doubtful, such a letter were ever written is immaterial.[61] The fact remains that the conception of a Mormon empire on the Pacific proved so attractive to the leaders of this sect[62] that preparation was made to emigrate as a body to the region around San Francisco. Lansford W. Hastings, who had returned again to the United States to obtain more settlers, was easily prevailed upon to make himself a sort of advance agent for the host and made his way back to California to prepare the ground for their coming.[63]

Reports of the design spread throughout the United States and aroused no little opposition,[64] the president, even, being petitioned to prevent the movement, but refusing because "the right of emi-

[60]Ford to Young, April 8, 1845, in Edward W. Tullidge, *History of Salt Lake City and Its Founders* (Salt Lake City. Edward W. Tullidge), 8.

[61]Polk, *Diary*, I, 205-206.

[62]Tullidge claims the plan originated as early as 1842, and that in 1844 Brigham Young instructed the twelve apostles to send out a delegation to investigate Oregon and California. *Ibid.*, 4-6.

[63]He arrived at Sutter's on Dec. 25, 1845. *Diary of New Helvetia Events*, MS., p. 25; Leese to Larkin, Jan. 12, 1846. Larkin MSS., IV, No. 12.

[64]Editorial in the New York *Sun*, and a letter from Bennett of the New York *Herald*, stating that 25 companies of 100 families were bound for San Francisco Bay, and would become troublesome to the United States, either in Oregon or California and the government should look to the matter. Reprinted in the Washington *Daily Union*, Nov. 20, 1845.

John H. Everett (Boston) to Larkin, Dec. 12, 1845—Mormons will be in California next spring and act as the Israelites did toward the nations among whom they came—"kill you all and take your possessions. . . . One of today's papers says . . . 10,000 are to start for California. Look out for an avalanche." Larkin MSS., III. Beach (New York *Sun*) to Larkin, Dec. 24, 1845—100,000 Mormons will be in California by spring. *Ibid.*, No. 407.

gration or expatriation was one which any citizen possessed."[65] Plans were made for an overland journey, to include the larger part of the Prophet's followers; while a smaller number were to be sent around by sea. This latter party, numbering nearly two hundred and forty, left New York in the *Brooklyn* on February 4, 1846, under the command of Samuel Brannan; while the main body, under Young, began its slow and toilsome way across the continent.

With neither of these companies has the present account much further concern. The one reached San Francisco on July 31, three weeks after Commodore Sloat's arrival, and tradition says that Brannan's first remark upon entering the harbor was, "There is that damned flag again."[66] The other, so it is said, stopped at Salt Lake because messengers from California met them there with word of the American occupation.

New activities of Lansford W. Hastings.—Hastings, meanwhile, in California was prophesying its speedy independence and claiming the connivance of the United States government in his project. As early as November, a friend in Boston had written Larkin to conduct his business as he would have done had he been in Texas ten years before, with a knowledge of the changes that were to occur there. Capital, he went on, was to be spent colonizing California; and a revolution, backed by American men and money, would soon result. The settlement of Oregon was only a blind for the occupation of the Mexican province. "The egg is already laid not a thousand miles from Yerba Buena and in New York the chicken will be picked. Our men of war are not ordered to California for nothing."[67] . . .

Hastings, as has been said, was advancing much the same idea of a strong backing in the United States, and even the sanction of the government. Thousands of people, he wrote Larkin, had their eyes turned to Oregon and California, determined to

[65] *Diary*, I, 205-206.

[66] Bancroft, XXII, 550.

[67] Samuel J. Hastings to Larkin, Nov. 9, 1845. Larkin MSS., III, No. 570. This Hastings had frequently been on the California coast as master of the brig *Tasso*. Whether he was a kinsman of the Lansford Hastings so frequently mentioned is uncertain; but evidently he had knowledge of his plans. See also Everett (Boston) to Larkin, Sept. 15—"if the plan of a colony succeeds we may soon expect a declaration of independence or a desire of annexation from your part of the world." *Ibid.*, No. 290.

make a final move and establish a permanent home. The firm of Benson and Company was about to establish a large commercial house somewhere in the territory, and send two ships a year to the coast for the free transportation of colonists. Under pledge of secrecy he concluded, "The arrangement is a confidential government arrangement. The expense thus incurred is not borne by that house, but by our government, for the promotion of what object you will readily perceive."[88]

How much ground Hastings had for this statement cannot be known. His project plainly embraced a much wider scope than the single element of the Mormon settlement; and it is probable that the commercial firm mentioned in his letter was actually concerned in a scheme for colonizing certain portions of the country. It is scarcely possible, however, that the government had any hand in it, as he insisted and doubtless believed.[89]

Native attitude toward the Americans.—Having spoken at length of the conditions existing in California, the feeling of the United States regarding its acquisition, the flow of immigration across the mountains that formed its eastern boundary, and the various rumors of independence current during the period, we come again to a discussion of the president's policy as it was affected by these circumstances. A further word, however, will be necessary to understand the attitude of the native Californians toward the Americans.

Naturally, the influx of strangers during the year 1845, and the known wish of the United States to possess California, caused

[88] L. W. Hastings to Larkin, March 3, 1846. Larkin MSS., IV, No. 55. Hastings was even then on his way to Oregon after more settlers. He had placed the number expected during the following year at 20,000.

[89] Tullidge insists that Brannan learned that the government was preparing to hinder the emigration of the Mormons (because it was feared they would join with the English or Mexican interests in California against the United States) and that Amos Kendall and other prominent men in Washington undertook to prevent this, provided Young and his followers would deed to them "through A. G. Benson and Co.," half the lands and town lots they secured in California. It was also said that Polk was a silent partner to the scheme.

Some interesting light is thrown on this assertion by Polk's *Diary*. Kendall seems to have taken a pretty active interest in Mormon affairs, as the Salt Lake historian says; and Polk refused, as we have shown, to prevent their emigration. But the president scarcely would have lent himself to any such scheme of petty blackmail. *Diary*, I, 444; 449-450; 455-456.

some apprehension among those of its inhabitants who desired to see the province remain under Mexican control. But on the whole there was little in the treatment accorded the immigrants by the Californians of which they had a right to complain. Frequent orders requiring their expulsion came from Mexico, but they were uniformly set aside by the California officials.[70] Though sub-Prefect Guerrero, perhaps with much justification, wrote to Castro: "Friend, the idea these gentlemen have formed for themselves is, that God made the world and them also, therefore what there is in the world belongs to them as sons of God,[71] he seems to have taken no measures to expel the foreigners from his own district. And while Castro, with some heat, declared before a *junta* at Monterey, "these Americans are so contriving that some day they will build ladders to touch the sky, and once in the heavens they will change the whole face of the universe and even the color of the stars,"[72] he perhaps thought it useless to endeavor to keep them from changing the destiny of California.

Indeed, the only measures that looked toward putting a stop to immigration, aside from *juntas* and meetings of the assembly (which came to nothing), were a recommendation made by Castro and Vallejo to the central government to purchase the fort at New Helvetia from Sutter;[73] and an abortive expedition from Mexico that was intended to cope with the incoming Americans. The control of New Helvetia, had it been in California hands, could have been made a serious obstacle to the arrival of parties across the Sierras; but though Sutter encouraged the suggested purchase, the proposition got no further than the Mexican archives. The second expedient met with no better success, ending in charges of extravagance, corruption, and the final revolt of such soldiers as had been assembled, even before they left Mexico, most of them

[70]Larkin to State Department, June 5, 1845—3 or 4 orders received from Mexico. Commandante General informs him he is perfectly willing to lay these aside and allow men to proceed to any place they desire (*Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 22); also, Castro, *Documentos*, I. Nos. 152, 214; Bancroft, XXI, 604-605.

[71]Guerrero to Castro, Jan. 24, 1846. Castro, *Documentos*, VI, No. 309.

[72]Alvarado, *Historia de California*, II, 133-134.

[73]Lancey, *Cruise of the Dale*, 41; Swasey, *Statement* (MS., Bancroft Collection); Bancroft, XXI, 614.

turning from the expedition to aid Paredes in his contest with Herrera.[74]

Larkin as Polk's informant.—Of the progress of all these events in California, Polk was well informed. Not merely did he have the usual channels of news, which, as we have seen, kept the public aware of much that transpired in the province; but in Thomas O. Larkin he had an additional source of reliable and frequent information.[75] The American consul's despatches, from the time of his appointment, dealt with the four or five broad topics that were of vital interest to the authorities at Washington in forming their California policy. These were, first, the condition of California from a political and military point of view and the strength of its loyalty to Mexico; second, the sentiment among the inhabitants toward the United States; third, the progress of American immigration and the reception of American settlers; fourth, the influence of European nations in the affairs of the province.

Omitting his references to the last subject, for the present, we find that on the remaining questions Larkin's communications to the state department gave full and important information. Especially did he emphasize the friendly feeling existing toward the American residents and the lack of attachment to Mexico. The military strength of the province he placed at two hundred and eighty Mexican troops and a smaller number of Californians, with a militia theoretically numbering one thousand, but practically not amounting to one-tenth of that force. The effectiveness of even this small army was decreased by half, he added, as part of it was stationed at San Francisco, in the northern part of the state, and part at San Diego, in the southern. Monterey had no cannon; and, to complete the demoralization, the Californians feared the Mexican troops more than those of a foreign nation,

[74]The rumors of this expedition filled California for many months, the force being reported as numbering from 500 to 18,000. Larkin to New York *Sun*, Sept. 30, 1845. Larkin MSS., III, No. 305; Pini to Larkin (from Mazatlan) July 3, *Ibid.*, No. 211; McKinley to Larkin, July 12. *Ibid.*, No. 218; Stearns to Larkin, June 19. *Ibid.*, No. 196. See also Bancroft, XXII, 33.

[75]See also Parrott to Buchanan, Oct. 11, 1845. MS., State Department. L. W. Hastings had likewise called upon the president and acquainted him with the conditions in California, when in Washington. Hastings to Larkin, Larkin MSS., III, No. 13.

and would gladly welcome the return of an American squadron such as Jones had brought.[76]

The revolt against Micheltorena was made the subject of considerable comment, Larkin mentioning as an aside that within twelve years four revolutions had occurred, all of which had been won by the Californians; and that five of the six Mexican generals, arriving during that time, had been sent back, while the remaining one had died. In conclusion he left the impression that the movement had resulted in the independence of the country, *de facto,* if not *de jure.*[77]

The effect of this early information is seen in the despatches sent to Commodore Sloat by the secretary of the navy, when, in the summer of 1845, war between this country and Mexico seemed imminent. "The Mexican ports on the Pacific," wrote George Bancroft in these confidential instructions,

> are said to be open and defenceless. If you ascertain with certainty that Mexico has declared war against the United States, you will at once possess yourself of the harbor of San Francisco and blockade or occupy such other ports as your force may permit. . . . You will be careful to preserve, if possible, the most friendly relations with the inhabitants, and, where you can do so, you will encourage them to adopt a course of neutrality.[78]

Two later despatches from Larkin, received in the fall of that year,[79] simply reiterated the opinions he had expressed in his former communication, laying emphasis in addition upon the designs of France and England on the province, a matter, as we shall see, that caused the administration no small anxiety.

Larkin's instructions.—At this time Polk was making arrangements to send Slidell upon the mission already mentioned. On October 17, while the question of the American minister's reception was so much in doubt as to delay his departure, Buchanan

[76]Larkin to Calhoun, Aug. 18, 1844. Larkin *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 9. Same to same, Sept. 16. *Ibid.*, No. 10.

[77]Larkin to Calhoun, March 22, 1845. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 19.

[78]*H. Ex. Docs.*, 29 Cong., 2 sess., No. 19, page 75. These are also printed in whole or in part in most of the secondary works on the period.

[79]Larkin to Secretary of State, June 5, 1845. MS., State Department; also Larkin *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 22. Same to same, July 10. MS. State Department; *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 25.

addressed a long, confidential letter to the consul, who, from Monterey, had furnished the government with so much of its valuable information. In this letter to Larkin, the internal policy the administration was determined to pursue regarding California was clearly outlined; and, by the appointment of Larkin as confidential agent to carry out the terms, definitely set in motion.

So much has been written regarding this despatch, since Bancroft first brought it to light, and it has been printed, either wholly or in part, so frequently that, important as it is, a mere summary of its contents will be sufficient here.[80] Aside from the notification it carried to Larkin of his appointment as confidential agent, it instructed him to guard against the encroachments and influence of foreign nations in California; to cultivate friendly relations with the inhabitants in every way possible on behalf of this government, and assure them that, if they declared their independence, the United States stood ready to receive them under her protection, whenever this could be done "without affording Mexico just cause of complaint"; and finally, to forward frequent communications to the department regarding the internal conditions of the province (with a list of its leading citizens and officials), its trade and commercial affairs, and the amount and character of the American immigration.

Three copies of this despatch left Washington. One went to Slidell to aid him in his negotiations with Mexico;[81] one was sent by way of Cape Horn and Honolulu on the U. S. S. *Congress;* and the third was entrusted to Lieutenant Archibald H. Gillespie of the marine corps. Going overland through Mexico, Gillespie was forced to destroy the written document in his possession, but before doing so memorized its contents.

Gillespie, however, was much more than a bearer of despatches. To him, as to Larkin, Polk had entrusted the carrying out of his policy in California, and an effort was made to keep his identity a secret. So, travelling as an invalid merchant seeking health, he reached Monterey on April 17, 1846,[82] delivering to Larkin the

[80] Bancroft, XXI, 596-597; *Century Magazine*, XIX, 928-929. For the complete despatch see Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 275-278; Rayner Wickersham Kelsey, *The United States Consulate in California*. Publications of the Academy of Pacific Coast History, Vol. I, No. 5, June, 1910, pp. 100-103.

[81] Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 304; Kelsey, 58 n.

[82] Bancroft; XXII; 26-27; Kelsey, 64.

news of his appointment and writing out from memory the instructions Buchanan had drawn up six months before.[83]

Bear Flag Revolt.—For the most part, the actual proceedings of Larkin and Gillespie in California after this time lie beyond the scope of the present narrative. In connection with the Bear Flag Revolt, and Frémont's participation therein, however, it will be necessary to go into some detail to determine whether or not it was a part of the president's policy to put such a movement into operation. To understand clearly the situation, we must note again that California's separation from Mexico could be achieved in two ways—by a revolt of the native Californians, aided by American residents; or by an uprising of the American residents against the native Californians. This condition was distinctly different, as will be readily seen, from that which had existed in Texas when Houston led the settlers there in the struggle for independence.

We have mentioned that Gillespie and Larkin were to serve as Polk's agents in California. The same mission was also entrusted to John C. Frémont, whose first arrival in California has been spoken of, and who had returned on his third exploring tour at the head of sixty-five men, reaching the province early in December, 1845.[84] It is not our purpose to follow the story of his difficulties with the California authorities (after they had given him permission to winter in the territory under their jurisdiction) and the affair at Hawk's Peak.[85]

It is worth while, however, to add a suggestion to account for the sudden change of front on the part of Prefect Manuel Castro and his peremptory order of March 5 that the American commander quit the country. The reasons for this have been variously given as the receipt of orders from Mexico (none of which

[83] *Ibid.*, also Larkin MSS., III, No. 337.

[84] Bancroft, XXI, 581-585. It is not considered necessary to go into detail regarding the division of the party. Frémont spent from Jan. 27 to Feb. 9 at Monterey, upon Larkin's invitation, buying supplies and discussing the political affairs of the country with the American consul. Kelsey, 52.

[85] For the permission granted by the California authorities, see Larkin to Manuel Castro (Larkin *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 76); Gov. Pio Pico to Castro, Feb. 18, 1846. Castro, *Documentos*, II, No. 23, copy. For the Hawk's Peak affair see Bancroft, XXII, 5-21, and citations; Kelsey, 98-99.

Castro would have obeyed unless he pleased);[86] the violation of a tacit agreement by Frémont to remain at some distance from the California settlements;[87] and the mere desire of the prefect to send a report of his zeal to Mexico, without having any hostile intentions whatever toward the strangers.[88] There seems to be sufficient ground, however, for adding as a fourth explanation, the influence of the British vice-consul, Alexander Forbes, who protested formally in the name of his government against the presence of Frémont and his followers in the department.[89] Castro, not only willing to make a show of pleasing Forbes, but fearing the displeasure of the Mexican government if he paid no heed to this remonstrance, had nothing else to do than bid the intruder be gone.

It was not long after this that Gillespie reached Monterey. In addition to the instructions for Larkin, he carried a note of introduction from Buchanan to Frémont and a package of letters to the same individual from Senator Benton, Frémont's father-in-law.[90] Without lingering long at Monterey, Gillespie hastened on to Yerba Buena in pursuit of Frémont, who, by this time, was well on his way to Oregon. At Yerba Buena, Gillespie spent some days with the American vice-consul, W. A. Leidesdorff, and then continued his journey, finally overtaking the explorer in the heart of the Oregon woods.

What passed between Gillespie and Frémont it would be interesting to know. No written instructions were sent to the latter by Buchanan, and even those given to Gillespie are not on file. Yet, both from the testimony of Frémont and Gillespie, and the

[86]This was the reason assigned officially but it was recognized as only a blind. Larkin to Commander of any American ship at Mazatlan, March 9, 1846. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 38; same to Secretary of State (*Ibid.*) Frémont, *Memoirs*, I, 461.

[87]Bancroft, XXI, 596-597.

[88]Larkin to Secretary of State, April 18. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 41.

[89]Forbes to Oliveria, Jan. 28, 1846, in Ephraim Douglas Adams, *British interests and activities in Texas, 1838-46* [*Addendum, English interests in the annexation of California*]. (Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins Press. 1910), p. 251. See also Guerrero to Castro (from San Francisco), Jan. 24, 1846. Castro, *Documentos*.

[90]Bancroft, XXII, 86, citations from the subsequent testimony of Gillespie and Frémont. Gillespie had also held several private interviews with Polk before leaving Washington. Polk, *Diary*, I, 84-85.

nature of the case, these could not have differed in substance from those received by Larkin.[91] Gillespie, however, believed in active measures and was well aware of the probable outbreak of a war with Mexico.[92] In addition Frémont had the letters of Benton, which, under guise of family matters, "contained certain passages enigmatical and obscure,"[93] bearing upon the subject of California's destiny. How largely responsible these were for the subsequent course of Frémont, will probably never be known.

He and Gillespie, returning at once to California, found the settlers on the Sacramento in a fit mood to revolt against the Californians. By encouraging these, if not actually becoming the leaders of the movement, they gave to it the aspect of having been begun with the sanction of the United States government; when, in reality, it was exactly contrary to the policy Polk had endeavored to carry into execution; and, furthermore, distinctly at variance with the course pursued by Larkin, the third of the administration's agents.

The consul, it is true, expected Frémont's arrival to result in important changes in the destiny of California.[94] And Gillespie had written him from San Francisco, on his way to find Frémont, that the Americans of that region had voluntarily expressed themselves in favor of a change, while one of them was already circulating the constitution of Texas.[95] But he had added that the Californians themselves were dissatisfied, and inferred that they were ready also to join the movement.

It needs scarcely be said that this latter idea constituted the sum and substance of Larkin's plan.[96] Moreover, he was in a

[91] Bancroft, XXII, 86.

[92] He had been detained some months in Mexico and hence knew of Slidell's probable rejection. Reeves, *American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk*, 282.

[93] Bancroft, XXII, 86 n., quotation from Frémont's later testimony.

[94] Larkin to Stearns, March 19, 1846. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 90. Marsh to Larkin, Feb. 15—"The distant rumors of mighty events have made me leave the retirement of my farm . . . and I have come to this place on a visit to Capt. Frémont. It appears that the present year will bring great changes on the face of California." Larkin, MSS., IV, No. 39.

[95] Gillespie to Larkin, April 25, 1846. *Ibid.*, No. 144.

[96] Larkin to Secretary of State, April 2, 1846—"The undersigned believes that a flag if respectfully planted will receive the good will of much of

fair way of bringing about a unification of the Californians with the American cause when the settlers' revolt completely upset his calculations, caused the California leaders to forget their mutual jealousies,[97] and joined them in common cause against the United States.

Larkin's activities, between his appointment as confidential agent and the outbreak of the Bear Flag revolution, had taken various forms. To several of the leading Americans, who had become Mexican citizens, he wrote a circular letter, embodying much of the news contained in the despatch from Buchanan, and urging them to aid in winning over the Californians.[98] One of these, Abel Stearns, he appointed his confidential assistant in the south.[99] By personal interviews with the most influential men of the north, with all of whom he was well acquainted, and by promises of future reward to those who advanced the interests of the United States, he sought to bring his plan into favor with the native leaders.[100] And, finally, he endeavored to influence the action of various *juntas* by persuading those known to be friendly to the American interests to attend as delegates.[101]

As has been said, these efforts gave promise of succeeding. Several of the principal Californians had come over definitely to Larkin's side.[102] And General Castro, in the presence of other influential men of the department, had drawn up "a short history of his plans for declaring California independent in 1847-8, as

the wealth and respectability of the country." *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 40. See also Leidesdorf to Larkin, May 7. Larkin MSS., IV, No. 111.

[97]A civil war between Castro and other northern leaders on one side, and Governor Pio Pico on the other was about to break out. Bancroft, XXII, 30-53.

[98]Larkin to Abel Stearns, Los Angeles; John Warner, San Diego, and Jacob Leese, Sonoma, April 17. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 100.

[99]Kelsey, 67-68.

[100]Larkin to Secretary of State, July 20, 1846, "*Address to Californians.*" *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 13. Larkin also advised many of the Californians to take up land before the change came. A copy of a grant of eleven square leagues along the San Joaquin is among the Larkin papers of this period. MSS., IV, No. 41.

[101]Larkin to Lease, May 21, 1846. Larkin, MSS., IV, No. 102. Same to Stearns, May 21. *Ibid.*, No. 101. Same to Secretary of State, June 1. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 44.

[102]See Larkin to Secretary of State, June 1st, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 44.

soon as a sufficient number of foreigners should arrive."[103] From the southern portion of the province equally encouraging reports were received;[104] and it is no wonder that the word of the taking of Sonora and the imprisonment of several of the California leaders, among whom was M. G. Vallejo, the most powerful man of the province, and a chief supporter of American annexation, caused Larkin unwelcome perplexity and surprise.[105]

"Why this affair has happened—how or by who[m] I cannot imagine—I am not sure it is true,"[106] he wrote when the report first reached him. Frémont he considered "culpable for moving in the affair of the Bear Party, and perhaps putting the party in motion." "The Bear Party have broke all friendship and good feeling in Cala. towards our government,"[107] was his final judgment on the matter. And with this judgment, it would seem, history must agree.

Why Gillespie and Frémont pursued the course they did will never be known with certainty. Nor is it our purpose to examine into the possible causes they later claimed in justification of their act.[108] Whether, as some insist, it was through a desire to assume the rôle in California that Houston filled in Texas,[109] cannot be stated with positiveness; yet this seems the most reasonable explanation. The influence of Benton in the proceedings may also have played an important part. Three years after the event, a former member of Polk's cabinet wrote, "The utter prostration of

[103]Larkin to Secretary of State, July 20, 1846. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 54.

[104]Stearns to Larkin, June 12, 1846. Larkin MSS., IV, No. 151. Warner to Larkin, June 11. *Ibid.*, 156.

[105]For Vallejo's friendliness to the United States see Bancroft, XXII, 758.

[106]Larkin to Mott, Talbot & Co., Mazatlan, June 18. Larkin MSS., IV, No. 165. Neither Leidesdorf nor Sutter had any knowledge of the plans or purposes of the revolt. Leidesdorf to Larkin, June 16, *ibid.*, No. 159; Sutter to Larkin. *Ibid.*, No. 160.

[107]Larkin to Buchanan, June 30, 1847. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, 67. See also Bancroft, XXII, 98, and citations.

[108]Benton, *Thirty years' view*, II, 688-689; John Bigelow, *Memoirs of the Life and Public Service of John Charles Frémont* (New York, Derby & Jackson, 1856), 141-145.

[109]This is the view taken by Bancroft. The same idea was expressed very positively to me by Dr. Willey, founder of the University of California, in an interview Nov. 29, 1911. Dr. Willey was personally acquainted both with Larkin and Frémont. See, also, the discussion in Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, 164-194.

Van Buren and of course his [Benton's] own hopes has made him frantic—rumor speaks of his emigration to California and it may be to carry out some such scheme as many attributed to him when Frémont was sent out with his proclamation."[110]

But whatever the motive—and it may have been entirely patriotic—Frémont and Gillespie certainly had no official sanction for what they did. Bancroft, Royce, and others, have shown how utterly inconsistent it would have been had Polk instructed Larkin to do all in his power to conciliate the native inhabitants and assure them of the friendship of the United States; and at the same time advised the two remaining agents to stir up a revolution against those very inhabitants. The whole policy of Polk with regard to California, on the contrary, was one of pacification. Even after war had been declared against Mexico, those who had the conquest of that province in charge were ordered to follow out this idea, and "to endeavor to establish the supremacy of the American flag without any strife with the people of California."[111]

Polk's own statement, moreover, clears up any remaining doubt. "A false statement is being attempted by the opposition," reads his diary for March 21, 1848, "to be made to the effect that this letter to Mr. Larkin contained instructions to produce a revolution in California before Mexico commenced the War against the U. S., and that Col. Frémont had the authority to make the revolution. The publication of the letter will prove the falsehood of such an inference."[112]

In summing up Polk's policy with regard to California, we may therefore say that it involved no scheme of rebellion on the part of the American settlers against the provincial authorities. It did, however, include a most earnest attempt at purchase; and, in addition, a systematic effort to win over the Californians to a desire for the protection of the United States, and tacit encouragement to separate from Mexico. Whether or not Polk actually brought on the Mexican War as a more certain method of securing the

[110]Cave Johnston to Polk, March 20, 1849. Polk MSS. Same to same, March 22. *Ibid.*

[111]Bancroft, XXII, 196-197 (citations from U. S. Gov. Docs., containing instructions to Sloat, Kearney, etc.).

[112]Polk, *Diary*, III, entry for March 21.

coveted territory (or as Winthrop expressed it, "had there been no California there would have been no Mexican War") we are not now prepared to say. Two remaining topics, however, must receive some attention before we bring this discussion to a close. The one concerns the effect of the rumored attempts of European nations to secure a foothold in California, and the other the part played by the slave holding south in its acquisition.

Chapter V

Rumored European Aggression in California; Effect upon American Policy of Annexation

The reported designs of England and France to secure control of California before its annexation by the United States have led, first and last, to a vast amount of surmise and historically unprofitable speculation. So far as France is concerned, the actual purposes and plans of the government (if indeed they existed) remain still unknown. But within the last few years an examination of the British Public Record Office has cleared the subject of English aggression of most of its mystery.[1]

This investigation has shown that while, indeed, the British government, as such, had no intentions of acquiring California and in fact manifested comparatively little interest in its affairs, yet English officials in Mexico, California, and on board Her Majesty's vessels of the Pacific, on the contrary, were exceedingly anxious to place the province under English control; or, if that could not be, to thwart the ambitions of the United States.[2]

The activities of these British representatives and the occasional rumor of French intrigue naturally aroused no little concern throughout this country and created a genuine alarm lest one or the other power should endeavor to forestall our own plans regarding the province. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to examine, not the actual designs of France or England, but the effect of reports and rumors regarding these designs upon the government and people of the United States.

The earliest fears of English aggression seem to have arisen shortly after the publication of the history of California by Alexander Forbes in 1839. The book was intended not so much to convey historical information as to encourage the colonization of California by British subjects; and contained a plan, worked

[1] This is due to the efforts of Professor Ephraim D. Adams of Leland Standford Jr. University. The results of this investigation as published in his *British Interests and Activities in Texas* have already received some notice.

[2] Adams, *British Interests*, 234-264.

out in some detail, by which a cession of that territory might be made by Mexico in payment of her debt of $50,000,000 to English bondholders. A company, composed of these creditors, was to be formed, and to it were to be given many of the same prerogatives of territorial sovereignty as those enjoyed by the British East India Company.[3]

Forbes's publication had a wide circulation, and,[4] as its whole tone was frankly a plea for English domination in California, aroused considerable comment throughout this country. It was said that negotiations, such as Forbes had suggested, were already in progress, and that England was taking this method of shutting the United States away from the Pacific and confining her domain to the country east of the Rocky Mountains—thus giving over to British control a monopoly of the East India and China trade.[5]

With the beginning of Tyler's administration the fear of English encroachments had become very real. Owing to the strained relations over the Texas, Oregon, and northeastern boundary questions, the faintest rumor of an attempt on the part of Great Britain to gain a foothold in California was sufficient not merely to excite the press of the country but to penetrate even into official circles.

Seizure of Monterey.—In 1842 came the seizure of Monterey by Commodore Jones, who gave as the compelling motive of his action that both he and other high officers of his fleet wished to preserve California from falling into the hands of "our great commercial rival," England. "The Creole affair," he wrote,

the question of the right of search, the mission of Lord Ashbur-

[3]Forbes, 153 (the eighth chapter was entitled "Upper California as a field for foreign colonization"). The author's brother wrote a preface for the book and, while decling to comment upon the plan of colonization, said it was one worthy the attention of the English bondholders and also of the government. The appendix contained articles on the harbor of California, steam navigation on the Pacific, and a prospectus of the "Pacific Steam Navigation Company." Forbes also laid great emphasis on the importance of constructing an Isthmian Canal under European control.

[4]See a review upon this work in the *Literature of American History*, Ed. for the American Library Association (Boston. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1902).

[5]*Niles' Register*, LVIII, 2; *Ibid.*, 70 (quotations from the New York *American*, New York *Express*, Baltimore *American*, and the New Orleans papers). See also Bancroft, XXI, 110-112.

ton . . . the well founded rumor of a cession of the Californias, and lastly the secret movements of the English naval force in this quarter . . . have all occurred since the date of your last despatch. Consequently I am without instructions . . . upon what I consider a vital question to the United States . . . the occupation of California by Great Britain under a secret treaty with Mexico.[6]

Warnings of Waddy Thompson.—But Jones was not the only one in government employ who looked askance at England's motives. From Mexico City, Waddy Thompson was urging in his despatches to Tyler and Webster British aggression as an important reason for the acquisition of California by the United States. In the first of these he said:

France and England both have [had] their eyes upon it [California]; the latter has yet.—She has already control of the Sandwich Islands, of the Society Islands, New Zealand, etc., etc., and through the agency of that Embryo East India Monopoly, the Hudson Bay Co. she will ere long have a monopoly of the commerce of the Pacific, and not an American flag will fly on its Coasts.[7]

Webster, however, appeared to treat this communication as of little moment, writing Thompson on June 27th that he thought England had no present designs upon California or even any objection to its acquisition by the United States.[8] But such an assurance was not sufficient for Thompson. In reply he wrote,

I have information upon which I can rely that an agent of this government is now in England negotiating for the sale, or what is precisely the same thing, the mortgage of Upper California for the loan of fifteen millions. In my first despatch, I glanced at the advantages which would result to our country from the ac-

[6]Jones to Upshur, *H. Ex. Docs.*, 27 Cong., 3 sess., No. 116.

[7]Thompson to Webster, April 29, 1842. MS., State Department. The H. B. C. had but recently established a permanent post in California when Thompson wrote this. The governor of the company, Sir George Simpson, had left the country on Jan. 27, less than two months before Thompson's despatch, and had sent a long communication, designed for the British government, urging the importance and ease of securing California. Simpson to Sir John H. Pelly, Honolulu, March 10, 1842, in *American Historical Review*, XIV, 86-93, *passim*.

[8]Webster to Thompson, in *Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (National Edition. 1903), XIV, 612. Webster had derived his information from Ashburton. Ashburton to Webster, April 28, 1842. *Ibid.*, 192.

quisition. Great as those advantages would be, they sink in comparison with the evils to our commerce and other interests, even more important, from a cession of that country to England.[9]

Even this seems to have caused Webster no alarm; while with word of the seizure of Monterey, the subject disappears for the time from Thompson's correspondence. In January, however, he began again his refrain of warning, perhaps exaggerating his own fears to arouse the secretary of state whom he considered entirely too indifferent to the danger. After speaking of his earlier despatches upon England's purpose, and expressing some resentment that they had been treated so lightly, Thompson went on:

I know that England has designs on California and has actually made a treaty with Mexico securing to British creditors the right to lands there in payment of their debts and that England will interpose this treaty in the way of a cession of California and that in ten years she will own the country.[10]

To all of this, however, Webster had the assurance of Everett and Ashburton regarding the tripartite agreement as sufficient answer.[11] But the country at large did not possess such reassuring evidence. So general became the feeling that Mexico had entered into such a treaty with England that the president was called upon by unanimous consent of the house to furnish any information in his possession as to the truth of the report.[12] To this he replied that the administration had no knowledge that confirmed the rumored negotiations.[13]

Perhaps rebuffed by the reception of his information, Thompson had little more to say regarding England and California for some months; when, as we have seen, his views underwent a com-

[9]Thompson to Webster, July 30, 1842. MS., State Department. The remainder of the letter was filled with a report of English assistance to Mexico against Texas, and a statement of the close alliance between the two nations.

[10]Thompson to Webster, Jan. 30, 1843. Webster MSS., Library of Congress. For any actual foundation for this despatch, see Adams, *British Interests*, etc., 237-240. Thompson still held his opinion in 1846. *Recollections*, 235.

[11]THE QUARTERLY, XVIII, 32-34. Tyler's biographer, however, gives as chief reason for the president's desire to bring about this tripartite agreement the report of the English mortgage. Tyler's *Tyler*, II, 260.

[12]*Niles' Register*, LXIII, 366.

[13]*Ibid.*, 384.

plete change and for the moment he hoped that an English-Mexican war might thrown the province into the lap of the United States.[14] Following Thompson's resignation as minister, Benjamin E. Green, Shannon, and Duff Green, from time to time issued similar warnings to those Webster had received, and of which we have just spoken.

English mortgage.—Mexico, cultivating friendly relations with England,[15] was said to have mortgaged California to that country for $26,000,000. The pledge expired in 1847 and, unless paid before that time, would result in the transfer of the country to Great Britain, whose control in this way would be extended not only over the whole of California, but eventually over Oregon as well.[16] Donelson, on his special mission to Texas, was sufficiently interested in this report to inquire directly of Elliot as to its truth; but learned nothing of a satisfactory nature, and came to the conclusion that it rested on insufficient evidence.[17]

The Hudson's Bay Company.—Larkin, meanwhile, from California, had been doing his part by calling attention to the rapid encroachments of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose employees were trapping, cultivating land, building mills and establishing themselves in various ways in that country and also in Oregon. The San Francisco agent had asked for extensive grants of land upon which to settle colonists and had no intention of quitting the province when game became scarce.[18] These statements, sufficiently grave in themselves, received further emphasis from a let-

[14] THE QUARTERLY, XVIII, 34-35.

[15] B. E. Green to Secretary of State, April 8, 1844. MS., State Department.

[16] Duff Green to Calhoun, Oct. 28th. Calhoun *Correspondence*, 979. Green added that the British consul general in Mexico was agent for the English company, and advised the State Department to secure a copy of the mortgage deed either through the Mexican or London legations. It could be had for $1500 or $2000 in Mexico. It should be remembered that Green was Calhoun's confidential agent.

[17] A. J. Donelson to Calhoun, Jan. 30, 1845. *Ibid.*, 1024.

[18] Larkin to Calhoun, June 20, 1844. MS., State Department: same to same, June 24th, and August 18th. *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 9. Larkin added he had seen a report in the paper that England might purchase California. For the reply to these despatches see Crallé to Larkin, Oct. 25. Larkin MSS., II, No. 233.

ter of Henry A. Pierce, of Boston, read on the floor of the house about this time.[19]

Report of Santa Anna's dealings with England.—But even more disquieting reports came from Shannon. Santa Anna had been captured but a few days before by the forces of the opposition, and important documents were found on his person. Certain of these had been published by the new administration to discredit him with the people, and the rest laid before the Mexican Congress in secret session. "From a portion of this correspondence," concluded Shannon's despatch,

> the fact has been disclosed that a negotiation was going on between President Santa Anna and the English Minister for the sale and purchase of the two Californias—That portion of the correspondence relating to this subject has not been published in the papers, but it has been laid before Congress in secret session and the pendency of such a negotiation may be relied upon as true—The English Minister has no doubt in this matter acted under instructions from his government; it may therefore be assumed that it is the settled policy of the English government to acquire the two Californias. You are aware that the English creditors have now a mortgage on them for twenty-six millions.[20]

For the present, however, Shannon thought the designs of England had received a set back in the overthrow of Santa Anna; and as the new administration were making political capital out of the disclosures regarding California, they would not themselves dare favor a measure similar to that of their discredited opponent. The report of Santa Anna's secret dealings received considerable publicity, both in this country and in Europe;[21] but exactly what foundation there was in fact for the rumor is not clear. It was about this time that Forbes, the British vice-consul at Monterey, was submitting his suggestion for an English protectorate through

[19] *Ap. Cong. Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 sess., p. 226.

[20] Shannon to Calhoun. MS., State Department.

[21] Raymond (Texas Legation at Washington) to Allen, Feb. 21, 1845. Garrison, *Tex. Dip. Cor.*, II, 364, in Am. His. Ass'n *Report*, 1908, II. See also extract from Paris *Presse* asserting that in the capture of Santa Anna had been revealed "one of the vastest projects which the undermining ambition of Great Britain ever conceived," in attempting to secure California. Charleston *Mercury*, March 10, 1845. The article was copied in the London papers without comment and denied in Parliament by both Peel and Palmerston. *Ibid.*, April 7th and 24th.

Barron;[22] and it may have been that some correspondence passed between the British representatives in Mexico and Santa Anna.

Polk's suspicions.—It was with such reports, as have already been cited, from Thompson, Green, Larkin and Shannon in the official files of the state department, and with even wilder rumors in the air, that Polk came to the President's office. Every outside influence, moreover, tended to make the new executive suspicious of England's policy. The unsettled Oregon boundary; the mutual spirit of animosity shown by the press of the two countries;[23] the whole western attitude and his schooling at the hands of Andrew Jackson; above all, the course of Great Britain with regard to Texas;[24] prepared him to accept the stories of English designs upon California with little hesitation.

McNamarra project.—Fresh reports, also, soon strengthened this belief. On May 13, the confidential agent, Wm. S. Parrott, wrote that the British fleet in the Pacific had been reenforced for the rumored purpose of taking and holding California in case of war between Mexico and the United States, using as an excuse for the action, the protection of English citizens in their mortgage claims on that province.[25] Later, Parrott said that the force bound from Mexico to California, to subdue the insurrection against Micheltorena, was to be commanded by an officer educated in France; and that the influence of this commander in California, according to reliable information, was to be used to the advantage of that nation by the French legation in Mexico. At any rate, said Parrott, "he certainly takes with him a large number of Frenchmen for some reason or other."[26]

[22]For Forbes's plan and Aberdeen's reply see Adams, *British Interests*, 242-250.

[23]Buchanan, in a speech on the Oregon question, March 12, 1844, said that the whole press of England, irrespective of class or party, had teemed with abuse of all things American for two years, until the mind of the British public was thoroughly inflamed against the United States. *Ap. Cong. Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 sess., p. 350.

[24]For Polk's fear of English influence in Texas see his private correspondence as follows: Yell to Polk, March 26, 1845; same to same, May 5th; Donelson to Polk, March 19th; Wickliffe to Polk, June 3, 4. Polk MSS.; Polk to Jackson, April 27th. Jackson MSS.

[25]Parrott to Buchanan, May 13, 1845. MS., State Department. Also for report that England was creating an unfriendly attitude in Mexico against the United States, see Shannon to Calhoun, March 27th. *Ibid.*

[26]Parrott to Buchanan, Aug. 5, 1845. MS., State Department.

A few days afterward, however, the American agent had occasion to change his Frenchmen into Irishmen, writing that the expedition had been delayed for lack of funds; while with it, "a young Irish Priest by the name of McNamarrah" was preparing to leave for California for the purpose of introducing Irish immigrants.[27] In this, it should be remarked, Parrott was not building wholly on his imagination.[28]

Larkin's despatch of July 10th.—In the fall, more emphatic despatches reached the state department. On October 11, Buchanan received a communication from Parrott which said that the least news coming from California excited great interest in English circles, especially among the members of the British legation.[29] On the same day a despatch, written July 10, reached Washington from the American consul at Monterey. This communication of Larkin's deserves special mention. In it he stated that the Hudson's Bay Company[30] had furnished the native Californians with arms and ammunitions to expel the Mexican governor, General Micheltorena,[31] in the preceding year. At the time his despatch was being written, however, Larkin said,

> There is no doubt in this country, but the troops now expected here in September [from Mexico] are sent at the instigation of the British Government under the plea that the American settlers in California want to revolutionize the country; it is rumored that two English houses in Mexico have become bound to the new general to accept his drafts as funds to pay his troops for eighteen months.[32]

[27]Same to same, Aug. 16th. *Ibid.*

[28]McNamarra's project was laid before Bankhead in 1844. He took only a "mild interest" in it at the time. Adams, *British Interests*, 253. Herrera, however, approved of it, though Paredes objected to the arrangement. Securing the consent of the Mexican government, McNamarra came to California where the assembly voted him a grant of 3000 leagues on July 4—an act which showed "a new feature in English policy, and a new method of obtaining California." Larkin to State Department, Aug. 18 and 24, 1846, *Official Correspondence*, II, Nos. 54-56. Benton and Frémont made much of this "McNamarra Scheme" as justifying the latter's participation in the Bear Flag Revolt. Bancroft devotes considerable space to this phase of the project.

[29]Parrott to Buchanan, Sept. 2, 1845. MS., State Department.

[30]See also Larkin to Secretary of State, June 5th. MS., State Department—received Sept. 16th.

[31]The revolt here referred to was that against Micheltorena.

[32]Larkin to Secretary of State, July 10, 1845. MS., State Department; also Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, II, No. 25. The apparent inconsis-

Of even greater importance was the information in the same despatch that both France and England had appointed salaried consuls in California, neither of whom had any apparent commercial business. The British representative,[33] especially, was a fit subject for suspicion. His ranch was located forty miles inland; he had permission to carry on his private business, while receiving pay from the government; as there was no English commerce his appointment became a mere blind; and finally, he was concerned in the affairs of the "gigantic" Hudson's Bay Company.

The effect exerted by these despatches upon the policy of the administration will be considered later. It remains for the present to note further communications that were well calculated to arouse a like suspicion against England.

Slidell, when upon his mission to Mexico, at first was unable to learn "anything that would authorize the belief that attempts are making by any European Power, to obtain a cession of any territory on the Pacific Coast," though the late arrival of a son of Sir Robert Peel, as bearer of despatches, from the British fleet in the Pacific, had caused some comment.[34] Some ten or twelve days later, however, Slidell was writing for instructions as to the course he should pursue regarding the British mortgage on Mexican territory, in case a treaty was negotiated. The same despatch like-

tency of charging the Hudson's Bay Company with aiding in the expulsion of Micheltorena and the British government with endeavoring to reinstate him is explained by the facts. In 1844 the British vice-consul, Forbes, was approached by the California leaders to know if his government would establish a protectorate over them in case they declared their independence. Forbes forwarded the information to the home government, both he and the consul, Barron, at Tepic, favoring the project. Upon the reply of the home office declining to have anything to do with it, however, "they transferred their support to the Mexican government, believing that Mexican control would be more favorable to British interests than an independent government in California." Adams, *British Interests*, 251. As early as 1842 Sir George Simpson wrote to Sir John H. Pelly (for the eyes of the government) that a single English cruiser on the coast with assurance of protection from Great Britain, would be sufficient for a declaration of independence on the part of the Californians and the establishment of a British protectorate. *Am. Hist. Review*, XIV, 89.

[33] For the activities of Alexander Forbes, see Adams, *British Interests*, 234-264, *passim*. On the other hand, Larkin seems to have forgotten that he himself urged a French consul's appointment. Larkin to Monsieur Gauden, Havre de Gras, April 21, 1844. Larkin MSS., II, No. 79.

[34] Slidell to Buchanan, Dec. 17, 1845. MS., State Department.

wise carried information that England was hindering his reception by the Mexican government.[35]

The rumored monarchy.—About this time, also, reports came to the administration of a plan to establish a monarchy in Mexico and call in a European prince—an arrangement necessarily fatal to Polk's purpose of securing California. John Black, the American consul at Mexico City, first called attention to this danger, saying that it was commonly reported that the revolution then in progress had such an end in view. Reliable persons had informed him that agents were in Europe soliciting a foreign prince; while France, England and Spain, having countenanced the plan, were being looked to as the backers and sustainers of the new monarch.[36]

Shortly after the receipt of Black's despatch, a private letter, equally positive in tone, came to Polk from the American ambassador at London. "It need not surprise you to discover at no distant day," wrote McLane, "that a favorite scheme with the leading Powers of Europe is to *compose* the *Mexican* trouble by giving her a Monarchial form of government and supplying the monarch from one of their own families."[37]

Slidell soon added his voice to this testimony of Black and McLane, calling attention to the fact that *El Tiempo,* the official organ of the Paredes administration, had come out openly in favor of the monarchy.[38] Three weeks later, the consul at Vera Cruz wrote that the Mexican government was bent, beyond question, on putting the plan into operation, in order to secure foreign intervention against the United States.[39] These reports later called out a reply from Buchanan to Slidell stating that this report had

[35]Slidell to Buchanan, Dec. 29, 1845. *Ibid.*

[36]Black to Buchanan, Dec. 30. *Ibid.*

[37]McLane to Polk, Jan. 17, 1846. Polk MSS. The plan was expected, McLane added, to arouse opposition in Europe to Polk's message and strengthen England in the Oregon controversy.

[38]Slidell to Buchanan, Feb. 2, 1846. MS., State Department.

[39]Dimond to Buchanan, Feb. 21. *Ibid.* The following quotation shows the basis upon which these reports rested: "Bankhead's interest . . . was greatly aroused by proposals . . . unofficially made by Mexicans of prominence that a solution of Mexican difficulties might be found in an overthrow of the republic and an establishment of a monarchy under a European prince. Bankhead was much attracted by the idea and Aberdeen expressed friendly interest." E. D. Adams, "*English Interest in California,*" *Am. Hist. Review,* XIV, 761, note. This note does not appear in the chapter on California in the author's "*British Interests and Activities in Texas.*"

been corroborated from other sources, but implying a doubt as to its foundation.[40] However, Slidell was to ferret the matter out, for it was a thing the American people could by no means permit. Later, Slidell wrote that a feeling favorable to the United States was arising among those in Mexico who opposed the idea; and in a second despatch outlined the difficulties its supporters had to overcome.[41] Still, he advised prompt and decisive measures on the part of the authorities at Washington to forestall its success. Two days after the receipt of this communication, the president consulted with Senator Benton as to what these measures should be.[42]

Agitation in the press.—While the reports of England's designs upon California, and the establishment of a Mexican monarchy were reaching the state department, the same accounts were finding their way into the public prints. Larkin's despatch of July 10, in somewhat stronger form, was sent by him to the New York *Sun*, and from that journal copied by many of the other newspapers.[43] In it only two alternatives were given—either California, with all its resources and the mile-wide bay of San Francisco, must belong to the United States or pass into the hands of France or England. With California also went the possession of Oregon. "Why they are in service," said the published despatch in referring to the recently appointed foreign consuls against which the state department had likewise been warned, "their government best knows, and Uncle Sam will know to his cost."

"The exhaustless wealth of the mines of Mexico, the broad and fertile acres of the Californias will fall a prey to British rapacity should there be none to interpose," was the opinion of the New Orleans *Picayune*.[44] And even the staid *American Review* lifted

[40]Buchanan to Slidell, March 13, 1846. MS., State Department. Rumor, said Buchanan, had already indicated the Spanish Prince Henry, son of Francisco de Paula, and the rejected suitor of Queen Isabella.

[41]Slidell to Buchanan, March 1 and 18. MS., State Department. See also Bancroft to McLane, March 20 in M. A. D. Howe, *Life and Letters of George Bancroft* (New York. Charles Scribner & Sons. 1908), I, 282.

[42]Polk, *Diary*, I, 326.

[43]Larkin to New York *Sun*, July 31, 1845. Larkin MSS., III, No. 235. Reprinted in *Niles' Register*, LXIX, 204; *Daily Union*, Oct. 21; Charleston *Mercury*, Oct. 22.

[44]*Picayune*, Sept. 27, 1845; see also *Daily Union*, June 16; Richmond *Enquirer*, Jan. 26, 1846.

up a voice of warning against English aggressions and in favor of American occupation.[45] The report of the proposed monarchy likewise received due publicity and unfavorable comment.[46] While the bitter attacks of the London *Times* against the United States as a nation of land-grabbers, and the repeated calls it made upon the British government to secure California or at least prevent its acquisition by the Americans, aroused no little indignation.[47]

Effect upon the policy of the administration.—The importance of the question of foreign interference in California lies not so much, however, in its effect upon the popular mind as upon the policy pursued by the government. On September 16, when considering the instructions for Slidell, Polk records that even the fact of his mission was to be kept secret, lest British or French influences should thwart its purpose. And from this time on the numerous despatches on the subject of foreign interference, of which mention has been made, figured prominently in the administration's course of action.

The importance especially of Larkin's communication of July 10 in this connection has never been duly appreciated. Three days after its receipt, Buchanan wrote privately to McLane regarding the Oregon controversy, mentioning several reasons why the compromise measure would meet defeat in the senate. The chief of these he gave as follows:

> The disposition of the two nations [France and England] to meddle in the concern of this continent, the strong suspicions entertained that they are now intriguing both in Mexico and California in relation to the latter:—all these have conspired to excite American feeling against Great Britain to a very high pitch. By advices from Monterey of the 10th of July last, we are informed of the arrival of a British and French consul in upper California without any ostensible commercial business—[Here followed the substance of Larkin's despatch, with a considerable portion of it in direct quotation] . . . I need not say to you what a flame would be kindled throughout the Union should Great

[45] *American Review*, Jan., 1846.

[46] *Picayune*, Jan. 10, 1846; *Ibid.*, March 7 (extract from Baltimore *American*); *Daily Union*, March 10th and 16th.

[47] *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 211; LXIX, 147; Richmond *Enquirer*, Sept. 12, 1845; *Daily Union*, Sept. 8, Oct. 23; New York *Journal of Commerce*, March 24, etc.

Britain obtain a cession of California from Mexico or attempt to take possession of that province.[49]

As affairs were in such a state, Buchanan further advised McLane that he himself thought the time too critical for urging the Oregon question, although the president was determined to give the year's notice.[50]

It may be mentioned in this connection, simply as a matter of interest, that not long before, Polk had received from Robert Armstrong, his close personal friend and newly appointed consul to Liverpool, a letter strongly advising him never to settle the Oregon question short of 54° unless England gave up all pretensions to California. "England must never have California," were his words, "and it seems to be advisable to make Oregon the bone of contention to prevent it. The whole country will sustain you on Oregon."[51]

England and Larkin's appointment.—In addition to Buchanan's letter to McLane, the administration's fear of foreign interference was similarly shown in the instructions sent to Larkin and Slidell. Larkin's appointment as confidential agent has often been condemned as an act smacking of international dishonor. Yet it should be remembered that Polk had every reason to believe that an English and a French agent were likewise masquerading under the guise of consul for the purpose of influencing the political future of California.

In the instructions to Larkin, therefore, we should naturally expect much space to be devoted to the subject of British and French designs.[52] And we are not disappointed. The commercial interests of the United States demand that the American consul shall "exert the greatest vigilance in discovering and defeating any attempts which may be made by foreign governments to acquire a control" over California. The president cannot "view

[49]Buchanan to McLane, Oct. 14, 1845. Polk MSS., Library of Congress; also a copy in the Polk MSS., of the Lennox Collection of the Library of the City of New York. The letter does not appear in the published writings of Buchanan by Moore.

[50]For Buchanan's endeavor to persuade Polk to assume a more moderate attitude, see Polk's *Diary*, I, 62-65.

[51]Armstrong to Polk, Aug. 4. Polk MSS.

[52]The same instructions were entrusted (probably) to Gillespie and Frémont.

with indifference the transfer of California to Great Britain or any other European Power." European colonization on the North American constinent must cease, as it can only work hurt to the United States and equal harm to the nations attempting it. The Californians, therefore, are to be warned of the danger of such domination to their peace and prosperity. They are to let events take their course along political lines unless Mexico endeavors to transfer them to Great Britain or France; then they are to resist with force—and the United States will assist them. Lastly, Larkin is not to awaken "the jealousy of the British or French agents" by assuming other than his consular character.[53]

England and Slidell's instructions.—The instructions to Slidell, first drawn up on September 16, but amended after the receipt of Larkin's 10th of July despatch,[54] laid an equally strong emphasis on the matter of foreign interference. One of the new minister's duties was "to counteract the influence of foreign Powers exerted against the United States in Mexico." Also—a point frequently lost sight of—Slidell was expected to accomplish, at that particular time, the object for which he was sent, not merely because of "the wretched condition of the internal affairs of Mexico," but also on account of "the misunderstanding which exists between the Government and the Ministers of France and England."[55]

The same determination to resist European colonization that had been expressed to Larkin was contained, even in a stronger form, in this document received by Slidell. He was instructed to ascertain whether Mexico proposed ceding California to France or England, and to take steps to prevent any such action, "so fraught with danger to the best interests of the United States." For if all the advantages of San Francisco harbor "should be turned against our country, by the cession of California to Great Britain our principal commercial rival, the consequences would be most disastrous."[56]

[53]Buchanan to Larkin. Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 275-278. It should be noted that Buchanan assigned as his reasons for these warnings, etc. Larkin's despatch of July 10th.

[54]This despatch was received Oct. 4th.

[55]For a report of this disagreement, see Parrott to Buchanan, Sept. 29 and Oct. 4. MSS., State Department.

[56]Buchanan, *Works*, VI, 294 et seq. The force of this idea of foreign control in California is still further shown in the opening paragraph of the part of these instructions dealing with California.—"There is another

Polk's re-statement of the Monroe Doctrine.—Polk, however, did not rest content with these secret efforts to thwart European influence in California. On December 2, came his first annual message with its enlarged affirmation of the Monroe Doctrine. California was not specifically mentioned in this document, but the wording was such as to be meaningless if applied to Oregon alone. This was so recognized at the time.[57] Moreover, Polk told Benton definitely, while the message was in the course of preparation late in October, that he had California in mind as well as Oregon. Great Britain, he said, had her eye upon California, intending to possess it if possible; but the people of the United States would see that she did not. "California and the fine Bay of San Francisco" were to be protected from English aggression as well as Oregon. Like Cuba, California might remain under its present owners but never pass into the hands of a more powerful nation.[58]

It has sometimes been held that this application of the Monroe Doctrine was merely a bogey used by Polk to alarm the country and justify his subsequent course in the eyes of the nation. Enough, it is believed, has already been said to show the falsity of such a charge. When he wrote—"the people of this continent alone have the right to decide their own destiny. Should any portion of them, constituting an independent state, propose to unite themselves with our confederacy, this will be a question for them and for us to determine without any foreign interference"[59]—Polk desired to warn England that the United States would brook no interference in case the program entrusted to Larkin in California was a success, and the inhabitants sought annexation to this country.

Similarly, when he announced that "no future European colony or dominion, shall with our consent, be planted or established on any part of the North American continent,"[60] he wished to an-

subject of vast importance to the United States which will demand your particular attention. From information possessed by this department it is seriously to be apprehended that both Great Britain and France have designs upon California."

[57] *Cong. Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., p. 350.

[58] Polk, *Diary*, I, 71 (Oct. 24th).

[59] James D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington. Gov't Printing Office. 1896), IV, 398.

[60] *Ibid.*, 399.

nounce clearly and distinctly to the British government that any attempt she might make to gain control of California would be opposed, with arms if necessary, by the United States.

Did Polk's fear of England hasten the Mexican War?—The foregoing discussion, it is hoped, has shown something of the apprehension that existed in the mind of President Polk and his advisers, lest, either directly or indirectly, European influence should hinder the acquisition of California by the United States. How large a part this played in bringing on the Mexican War, would be interesting, but impossible, to say. In arriving at the effect of this apprehension, however, it should be remembered that Polk's attitude on all great public questions was moulded largely by Andrew Jackson, who had warned him against England both in her relation to Texas and California,[61] and that he had every reason to believe, and did thoroughly believe, from the reports that came from Mexico and California that European influence was at work to defeat his purpose. He laid the blame for Slidell's rejection directly at England's door.[62] And even as late as the outbreak of the war, his secretary of state feared that if England learned of his determination to acquire California, she, and perhaps France, would join Mexico against the United States.[63] But whatever influence this may have exerted upon Polk's determination to commence hostilities, it surely was not with insincerity that he wrote after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, "The immense value of ceded territory does not consist alone in the amount of money for which the public lands may be sold . . . . the fact that it has become a part of the Union and cannot be subject to European power, constitutes ample indemnity for the past."[64]

[61] *Ap. Cong. Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 sess., p. 445.
[62] *Diary*, I, 337 (April 18, 1846).
[63] *Diary*, I, 396-399 (May 13th).
[64] Richardson, IV, 599.

Chapter VI

Slavery and the Early Sentiment for Annexation*

Before bringing to a close this discussion of American interest in California prior to the Mexican War, a word must be said regarding the idea that Polk's desire for California was prompted largely by his wish to extend the area of slavery, and that the acquisition of the territory itself was brought about chiefly through Southern efforts. Of late years, with the clearing away of much of the historic mist and fog, arising from the bitter controversies before the Civil War, the whole subject of slavery in its relation to territorial expansion is seen in a clearer and less distorted light. Even the annexation of Texas is coming to be considered chiefly as a phase of the westward progress of the American people and no longer a mere device of slave holding states.

To a much more marked degree, is this true of the new attitude toward the acquisition of California. Yet the charge has been made so frequently in one form or another that 'the Southerners were after bigger pens to cram with slaves'—"having acquired Texas they longed for New Mexico and California,"—it seems well to point out a few salient facts that such writers as Rhodes,[1] Henry Wilson,[2] Jay,[3] H. H. Bancroft,[4] Henry Cabot Lodge[5] and other members of the older[6] school of American historians, have apparently overlooked.

One indeed has difficulty in finding any true grounds at all for

*This does not pretend to be an adequate or exhaustive study of the subject. It is written only to show in a broad way why the acquisition of California cannot be considered a slavery measure.

[1]James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States* (New York, Macmillan. 1894), I, 87.

[2]Henry Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America* (Boston. Houghton, Mifflin and Company. 1879), II, 9.

[3]Jay, *Review of the Causes and Consequences of the Mexican War*, 107.

[4]H. H. Bancroft, *Works*, XIII, 344.

[5]Henry Cabot Lodge, *Daniel Webster* (American Statesman Series), 289.

[6]For a more recent writer taking this view, see H. Addington Bruce, *Romance of American Expansion* (New York. Moffat, Yard & Co. 1909), 139.

the opinion of this group. Their argument, however, runs about as follows: The Mexican War had as its object the acquisition of California; it occurred during the administration of a southern president, and was largely the product of his own devising; it was therefore fought simply to extend the area of slavery. As Henry Wilson expressed it in *The Rise and Fall of the Slave Power,* the "march into territory inhabited by Mexicans . . . meant more than 'to defend our own and the rights of Texas.' It could only mean, it did mean, the acquisition of more territory, in which to establish slavery, and by which the further extension and development of slave holding institutions could be promoted."

Those who adopt this course of reasoning, however, leave out of consideration a most essential fact. The movement for the annexation of California, as we have endeavored to show, did not begin with the presidency of James K. Polk, nor with the outbreak of the Mexican War. It originated more than a decade before either of these events and by 1846 had developed such strength and headway that its successful culmination was merely a matter of time, as was even then pretty generally recognized. After 1846 the course of the movement was obscured by the acrimonious debates over the conduct of the war, and the Wilmot Proviso—the latter especially precipitating a conflict of principle in which the south took an active and determined part. It is scarcely possible, however, to maintain, as some have done, that the pro-slavery forces originated and gave vigor to the actual movement for annexation, because they opposed the Wilmot Proviso. We shall save ourselves from this error if we remember that the question at issue from 1846 until 1850 was, after all, not so much one of acquisition, *per se,* as of method and status. We are not concerned at this time with the way in which California was secured nor with the contest as to whether it should be free territory or slave. Our contention is simply this, that the keen desire for Mexican territory on the Pacific, which developed among the American people prior to 1846 and found its gratification in the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, was not inspired by sectional issues, and in no sense deserves to be called a slavery measure.

California as an off-set to Texas.—There are a number of reasons upon which we venture to base this assertion. In the first

place, contrary to the generally accepted view of the matter, before 1845 the south proposed the acquisition of California as free territory in order to neutralize the opposition of the north to the annexation of Texas.

We have already seen that Jackson urged upon Wharton the necessity of including California within the limits of Texas in order to reconcile the commercial interests of the north and east to the program of annexation by giving them a harbor on the Pacific.[7] Waddy Thompson, Calhoun's friend and political disciple, did not expect to see slavery established in the territory whose acquisition he so strenuously urged, but thought the north would favor his project because of their commercial and fishing interests.[8] The same idea was present in Tyler's plan of a tripartite agreement when early in 1843 he wrote Webster:

> The mere recognition of Texas, would have the effect . . . of separating that question from California . . . and using up all the agitations which you anticipated. Whereas introduced into the same treaty the three interests would be united and would satisfy all sections of the country. Texas might not stand alone nor would the line proposed for Oregon. Texas would reconcile all to the line, while California would reconcile or pacify all to Oregon.[9]

As late, too, as March 10, 1846, the Charleston *Mercury* credited the rumored annexation of California to the Whigs as an offset to the annexation of Texas, and congratulated that party on thus endeavoring to regain popular favor. While even that knight errant of the anti-slavery cause, Joshua R. Giddings, seems to have thought of the annexation movement from beginning to end solely as a free soil movement. Speaking on the floor of the house on July 14, 1846, he charged President Polk with seeking the annexation, not of California, but of the Mexican states north of the 22d parallel in order to establish slavery in the territory so secured, "at the moment," as he said, "when our rapidly increasing population is flowing into Oregon and California,—when free states are growing up in the former and the latter gives prom-

[7] THE QUARTERLY, XVIII. 17.
[8] *Ibid.*, 28.
[9] *Ibid.*, 33.

ise of preparation for annexation as a counterpart of Texas . . ."[10]

Favorable attitude in the north.—A second reason for the belief that the annexation of California was not a slavery measure, is the fact that the movement found its strongest popular favor in the north. Most of the contemporary newspaper and magazine articles which advocated the acquisition of this portion of Mexican territory first appeared in New York or New England. Thomas O. Larkin and other American residents of California were regular correspondents, not for southern newspapers, but for the Boston *Daily Advertiser*, the New York *Journal of Commerce*, and the New York *Sun*—the editor of the *Sun*, especially making it the settled policy of his paper to create a sentiment for annexation by publishing the most glowing accounts of California obtainable, and seeking to arouse public interest in other ways best known to members of his profession.

In this connection it may be of passing interest to call attention to articles that appeared in two leading American periodicals of January, 1846. One published in the *American Review*, known to its opponents as the "Text Book of the Whig Party," gave a complete, though somewhat exaggerated picture of the rich resources of California, spoke of the miserable control exercised by Mexico over the province, and urged its immediate annexation to the United States, provided this could be accomplished by peaceful means.[11] In De Bow's *Review*, afterwards the most influential journal of the south, an important place was also given to a discussion of California. The picture here drawn, however, was, in marked contrast to the glowing description of the northern writer, dreary in the extreme. California's soil was hopelessly sterile and cursed with drought, while its other resources were so limited that the country "would never become of any great importance in the history of the world or advance to any con-

[10]Speeches in Congress by Joshua R. Giddings (Boston and Cleveland. Jewett & Co. 1853), 258-259.

[11]Above, p. 242. As early as March 5, 1845, the *Journal of Commerce* credited the Whigs with aiming to secure California in order to offset the popularity the Democrats had won in urging the annexation of Texas. See also Richmond *Enquirer*, Jan. 26, 1846.

spicuous position, either agriculturally, commercially, or politically."[12]

De Bow's article probably did not represent the common opinion of the south. Yet the interest with which the commercial states of the north regarded the future of California was unquestionably greater than that of any other section of the country, with the possible exception of the extreme west. For it was natural that those who had important trade relations not merely with California, but with India, China, and the Sandwich Islands, beside extensive whale fisheries, should of all others desire most eagerly a harbor and territory on the Pacific. It was for this reason, as much as any other, that Webster, who would scarcely be called the champion of slavery, considered San Francisco as twenty times more valuable than all Texas, and was so desirous of securing California while secretary of state that he even proposed to take Everett's place as ambassador to England in order to facilitate the adoption of the tripartite agreement.[13]

Character of immigration.—So far, also, as forces were at work locally in California to bring about a cession of the province to the United States, one finds the influence almost wholly of northern origin. Indeed, the charge that southern immigrants and southern leaders acted dishonorably in Texan affairs, can be returned (if in either case the charges are valid) with good interest against the north in the case of California. Lansford W. Hastings, the leader of a very ambitious scheme for independence, came from Connecticut, Marsh, his associate, Alfred Robinson, and J. T. Farnham, whose writings stimulated widespread interest in California throughout the United States, were also natives of New England; while Abel Stearns, Larkin's confidential advisor in Southern California, and Larkin himself, who played such an important part in the whole annexation movement, were from Massachusetts. Indeed it is hard to find more than one or two resident Americans of any prominence in California at this time who were

[12] De Bow, *Commercial Review*, I, 65-66. "It was this article that first brought De Bow into prominence and that was quoted in debate in the French Chamber of Deputies." H. P. Dart, in *Tulane University Magazine*, bound in copy of above in University of California Library.

[13] THE QUARTERLY, XVIII. 33.

not of New England origin.[14] As for the rank and file of immigrants who arrived in California up to 1846, it cannot be said that they came from any one section of the Union. Some were from the south and some from New England; while the great majority were from the frontier states of the west. Many had set out originally for Oregon but for one reason or another had changed their destination to California. They were trappers, farmers, mechanics and laborers who thought as little of establishing slavery as of setting up a monarchial government.[15]

Proposed boundary lines.—One further point remains to be discussed, which of itself precludes any idea that the desire to establish slavery in California furnished the motive for its annexation. On August 6, 1835, the United States government made its first attempt to purchase California. Forsyth's instructions of that date to Butler placed the desired line of boundary on the 37th parallel and expressly disclaimed any purpose of securing territory further south, or below the Bay of San Francisco. Something like a year later, Jackson offered the captured president of the Mexican Republic, who had been sent to Washington by the victorious Texans, three and one-half million dollars on behalf of the United States, for a line extending along the 38th parallel from the Rio Grande to the Pacific. On June 17, 1842, Webster instructed Thompson to secure, if possible, territory on the Pacific in return for the American claims against Mexico. The main object of the negotiations, according to the despatch, was to secure the harbor of San Francisco, although other territory might be added. Later, this same purpose was expressed in the terms of the tripartite agreement forwarded to Edward Everett at London.

On Nov. 8, 1845, Secretary of State Buchanan sent to Slidell, Polk's confidential Mexican agent, his official instructions, by which he was empowered to offer the Mexican government something over $25,000,000 for a line extending west from the southern boundary of New Mexico, or "for any line that should in-

[14]Bancroft, *Pioneer Register and Index.* In a list of those of any prominence in California prepared by Larkin for the State Department, nine were from New England, two from New York, one from Ohio, one from Maryland, and three unspecified.

[15]Larkin to State Department, June 15, 1846 (*Description of California* in *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, 94-96); Sutter to Larkin, July 15, 1846. Larkin MSS., III, No. 220.

clude Monterey within the territory ceded to the United States." If this could not be obtained, he was to offer $20,000,000 for a "line commencing at any point on the Western line of New Mexico and running due West, so as to include the Bay and Harbor of San Francisco.[16]

It is surely a puzzling problem, why, if the acquisition of California owed its origin to slavery, these official instructions for its purchase, constituting all that were issued between 1835 and the outbreak of the Mexican War, without exception should have placed the desired line of boundary above, or only slightly below, the 36° 30′ parallel, where under no circumstances could slavery hope to exist.

Southern opposition to President Polk.—Up to 1846, therefore, the matter of acquiring California, both in the province itself and throughout the United States, can scarcely be considered as a slavery, or even a sectional measure. With the outbreak of the Mexican War and the bitter controversy arising over the Wilmot Proviso a few months later, the entire aspect of affairs was changed, and the subject becomes too complicated to be susceptible of adequate treatment in this place. And yet even from this time on there is certainly no such clear sectional division on the question as many writers of a past generation would have us believe. On the contrary, it found its advocates as well as its opponents both in the north and in the south. It was Alexander Stephens of Georgia who introduced a resolution on January 22, 1847, in the house, that no portion of Mexican territory should be acquired as the result of the war; while Berrien of the same state attempted to secure the passage of a like resolution in the senate as an amendment to the three million bill, some ten days later.[17]

"I say in my humble judgment and speaking as a southern senator representing a southern state," said Berrien on this subject, "that the duty of the south—the interests of the south—the safety of the south—demands that we should oppose ourselves to any and every acquisition of territory."[18] Badger, of North Caro-

[16]This despatch to Slidell, as well as the other references to boundary just cited, have received due notice elsewhere in this discussion.

[17]*Cong. Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 240, 310. Ewing of Tennessee introduced a similar measure, *Ibid.*, p. 230.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 330. See also Von Holst, *Political and Constitutional History of the United States*, III, 303.

lina, echoed Berrien's statement and denied that the people of his state desired an addition of territory from Mexico to any considerable extent.[19] Butler, of South Carolina, cared only for the port of San Francisco and rejoiced that this lay above the line of the Missouri Compromise.[20] Toombs was opposed to taking "an inch" of Mexican territory.[21]

In his own party, also, Polk found his strongest opponents to be southern men. Of the twelve Democrats opposing the war resolution in the house, eleven came from the south.[22] Calhoun and his followers were of course against the president, and cared so little for California that they were willing to imperil its acquisition for the sake of discrediting the administration.[23]

Polk's views.—Turning to Polk's own conception of slavery in its relation to California, we shall find it, also, entirely different from what some writers have led us to believe. Though Polk wanted the line of boundary to run somewhat farther south,[24] Slidell's instructions laid emphasis only upon the possession of San Francisco; and it was this harbor, and not a new area for slavery, that was considered "all important to the United States."[25] An added proof of the lack of sectional bias in Polk's efforts to secure the territory is shown by the fact that when he wished to send a regiment, whose members should eventually become citizens of California, he chose New York as the field for enrollment and not one of the southern states as he might well have done.[26]

[19] *Ap. Cong. Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 121-122. See also *Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 sess., p. 338.

[20] *Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., p. 448.

[21] *Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 sess., p. 141.

[22] *Ap. Globe, Ibid.*, pp. 412-413.

[23] Calhoun's attitude is seen best in his correspondence during the period. He feared lest Polk should attempt to seize the whole of Mexico. Polk asserted that Calhoun was almost indifferent at this time to the establishment of slavery in California. *Diary*, II, 283-284. For the further division in the south against the president's policy, see the Charleston *Mercury* of Feb. 10, 1847.

[24] *Diary*, I, 34-35. The line suggested by Polk ran about on the 32d parallel.

[25] Slidell's instructions already cited.

[26] Marcy to Col. J. D. Stevenson, June 26, 1847. *Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., p. 809. The men were to be of "good habits" and "various pursuits" who would remain as citizens when the war was over. They left New York October 26, arriving in San Francisco March 6, 1847. Three hundred of the regiment were still living in California in 1867. Cronise, *Natural Wealth of California*, 54-55.

The president's own words, however, unless we are to believe him absolutely insincere, best explain his position. He regarded the Wilmot proviso as "a mischievous and foolish amendment"; and believed that slavery should in no way be connected with the peace negotiations with Mexico, or with the war. Those who insisted upon joining the two called forth his condemnation, as working ruin to the country.[27]

His own plan for the settlement of the question was stated repeatedly in his *Diary*, and can in no way be construed as favoring the south against the north. In referring to a visit from Senator Crittenden, the Whig senator from Kentucky, to whom he had spoken of securing New Mexico and California as indemnity, he wrote,

I told him I deprecated the agitation of the slavery question in Congress, and though a South-Western man and from a slave-holding state as well as himself I did not desire to acquire a more Southern Territory than that which I had indicated, because I did not desire by so doing to give occasion for the agitation of a question which might serve to endanger the Union itself. I told him the question would probably never be a practical one if we acquired New Mexico and California because there would be but a narrow ribbon of territory south of the Missouri Compromise line of 36° 30′ and in it slavery would probably never exist.[28]

Exactly why Polk should send Slidell to Mexico, appoint a confidential agent in California, offer twenty-five millions of dollars, and perhaps go to war for the purpose of securing a "narrow ribbon of territory" in which to establish an abstract slavery, does not clearly appear. So far from being an ardent champion of the south, on the contrary, the president was far more open to the criticism of his opponents that he was favoring the north.[29]

[27] *Diary*, II, 75 (August 10, 1846); *Ibid.*, 305 (Jan. 4, 1847).

[28] *Diary*, II, 350. Polk had expressed the same idea to David Wilmot (*Ibid.*, 289) and to Calhoun (p. 283), as well as to others. He had favored the extension of the same line in the annexation of Texas (Curtis, *Buchanan*, 1, 580). He thought if this plan were adopted in settling the controversy over California and New Mexico, "harmony would be restored to the Union and the danger of forming geographical parties avoided." *Diary*, June 24, 1848.

[29] Charleston *Mercury*, Feb. 17, 1847. A rumor had arisen that Polk would not negotiate for territory south of 36° 30′ If this were true, said the writer, the south would do well to face the issue at once "while our men have arms in their hands."

Calhoun considered Polk as his direct opponent, and classed him with

The larger part of the territory, and the only part considered of much value, lay above the Missouri Compromise line.[30] Though refusing to have anything to do with the Wilmot Proviso, Polk expressed a willingness, even against southern opposition, to sign a bill prohibiting slavery in Oregon.[31] And when urged by Calhoun to appoint southern men to control the government in California and New Mexico, he declined to commit himself.[32]

In the complete bewilderment with which the president saw the injection of the slavery question into the debates on the acquisition of California; and in the middle ground he occupied between the extremists both of the north and of the south,[33] one sees how sincerely he regarded the measure as national and not sectional in scope. We may perhaps blame Polk for failing to perceive that his desire for empire would inevitably bring the great issues of slavery before the American people. But we can scarcely say he had anything less than the interest of the whole nation at heart. Like Jackson he was more the product of the west than of the south, and he looked through the eyes neither of Calhoun nor of Adams, but of Jackson. He was not sectional, and if he overlooked the significance of slavery in its bearing upon California, it was because his thoughts ran to national greatness. His object was not to secure 'bigger pens to cram with slaves,' but to give to the United States wide boundaries and the mastery of the Pacific.

the "most rabid of the Whigs" when endeavoring to secure the adoption of his "Address of the Southern Delegates . . . to their constituents." Calhoun to Mrs. T. G. Clemson, Jan. 24, 1849. *Correspondence*, p. 761, and note.

[30] *Daily Union*, Feb. 19, 1847 (Denial of a charge of sectionalism against Polk).

[31] *Diary*, III (entry for August 8, 1848).

[32] *Ibid.* (entry for July 16, 1848).

[33] On Jan. 22, 1847, he wrote, "Even the question of slavery is thrown into Congress and agitated in the midst of a foreign war for political purposes. It is brought forward at the north by a few ultra Northern members to advance the prospects of their favorite [for president]. No sooner is it introduced than a few ultra Southern members are manifestly well satisfied that it has been brought forward, because by seizing upon it they hope to array a Southern party in favour of their favorite candidate for the presidency. There is no patriotism on either side, it is a most wicked agitation that can end in no good and must produce infinite mischief." (*Ibid.*, II, 348.) See also page 340 . . . "they are engaged in discussing the abstract question of slavery, and gravely considering whether it shall exist in a territory which we have not yet acquired and may never acquire from Mexico. The presidential election of 1848 has evidently much to do with this factious state of things."

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[1]Throughout the text, wherever reference is made for the first time to any publication, the name of the publisher, together with the date and place of publication will be found in a footnote. It seems inadvisable, therefore, to repeat these in the Bibliography.

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